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THE

BATTLE FOR NATIVE INDUSTRY.

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THE BATTLE FOR NATIVE INDUSTRY.

THE DEBATE
UPON
THE CORN LAWS,
THE
CORN IMPORTATION AND CUSTOMS' DUTIES BILLS,
AND
THE OTHER FINANCIAL MEASURES OF THE GOVERNMENT,
IN SESSION 1846.

REPRINTED, BY PERMISSION, FROM
"HANSARD'S PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES."

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

OFFICE OF THE SOCIETY
FOR THE
PROTECTION OF AGRICULTURE AND BRITISH INDUSTRY,
17 OLD BOND STREET,
LONDON.

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THE BATTLE FOR NATIVE INDUSTRY.

THE DEBATE UPON THE CORN LAWS

IN SESSION 1846.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Friday, March 13, 1846.

CUSTOMS AND CORN IMPORTATION REPORT.

THE Report on the Customs and Corn Importation Resolutions was brought up. On the Question that they be read a Second Time,

Mr. SPOONER thereupon rose to move that the Resolutions be read a second time that day six months. He felt bound to make this Motion, because he considered they were about striking a fatal blow at the prosperity of this country, and to put at hazard the national credit, by the removal of protection to British industry—that system under which commerce, agriculture, and manufactures had attained their present state of greatness and renown. It was under that principle of protection to native industry, that they had been able to compete successfully with foreign countries; under that system had grown up their ships, their colonies, and their commerce, which had excited even the envy and admiration of Napoleon Bonaparte, who declared he would give half of his empire for them. He thought that by abandoning that principle they would be in serious danger of losing these advantages. What grounds had been urged for abandoning this principle? They had been

told that experience had proved that those articles from which protection had been removed, had increased in price; in fact, that by the removal of protection, the price of the article had universally increased. [Sir R. PEEL: The price universally increased! I did not say so.] He regretted if he had misrepresented the right hon. Baronet; but he certainly understood the right hon. Baronet to argue from the fact, that the price of cattle had risen under the provisions of the late Tariff—that the diminished protection had proved a benefit rather than an injury to the interests from which protection had been taken. He thought that the argument of the right hon. Baronet had been already fully answered. It was proved, beyond a doubt, that the price which butchers' meat had maintained, had arisen from causes very different from the removal of protection. He would not weary the House by details upon the subject; but he might just briefly state, that, owing to disease and a dry season, graziers were obliged to send their cattle to market before they were fat—they had no food for them: added to this, a panic had seized the graziers on account of the Government measure—a low price was the natural consequence of these things at the time, and a short supply in subsequent years, which short supply naturally increased the price. He would not go at length into a refutation of all the arguments

that had been advanced by the right hon. Baronet, showing how the removal of protection had favourably influenced trade and manufactures; but he would just mention one department of manufactures, which came under his own immediate knowledge—the glove trade—for he resided in the neighbourhood of the largest glove manufactories in England. This experiment was the first tried in free trade; and the effect of this experiment was, that out of 100 manufactories existing at that time in Worcester, there were only forty now remaining; and by the last census, there were 800 houses vacant in that city. He knew a number of glove manufacturers, who were maintaining their families in comfort, contributing their shares towards the public burdens and to an increase of the wealth of the country, who were thrown out of employment, and driven into indigence for the remainder of their days, by the removal of protection. What became of the poor operatives who had been brought up to this trade, and could do nothing else? Their labour was their capital—their skill had been rendered valueless—they were thrown out of employment, could work at none other, they became a burden upon society, and were reduced to the utmost destitution. The noble Lord the Member for the city of London had, in his work on the Constitution, shown the fallacy of the argument, that when one employment fails, another can be taken up; he stated that it could not be done—the blacksmith could not become a silk weaver; he showed that it was not safe to be guided by general principles, but that they should look to practical effects, and take care how they meddled with trade. Not only in Worcester, but in Hereford and the adjoining neighbourhood, the glove trade was extensively carried on; but in many of the latter districts there was not now a vestige of it. Was it not mere clap-trap, therefore, to talk of buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest markets? They bought cheapest in the French markets, in this instance, and they paid very dearly for it indeed, for they ruined a very important branch of their own manufactures. Cheapness did not always consist in the small quantity of money paid for an article; for although at a low price, the article was often too dearly bought, when at the expense of their own trade: to the money paid must be added the cost of the destruction of capital, and the ruin of the individuals whose

skill, whose capital, and whose labour was involved in the issue. The noble Lord the Member for Lynn had shown so clearly and so ably the evils which the removal of protection had caused in the silk trade, that he felt it unnecessary to enter upon it. No one could have listened to the unanswered and unanswerable speech of that noble Lord, without being convinced of the evil which resulted from what was called buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market. The arguments of the noble Lord had not been answered—they were irrefragable. It was a vain anticipation for hon. Members to expect that any measures under the present monetary system, would ensure continued prosperity to trade and manufactures. Every year showed that some branch of industry was in great distress and depression. Manufactures suffered one year—then agriculture; they probably both revived in another year; and then it was imagined that the country was in a prosperous state. But it was all a false prosperity. After the termination of the war in 1815, very general and extreme distress ensued. Of course, causes for this were sought. First, they blamed the change from war to peace; but the evil remained so long that practical men began at length to see that it could not be attributable to that cause, and they were forced to find out another. It was next attributed to over-abundant harvests; the bounties of Providence were blamed as the cause of national suffering. Then followed the time of wet seasons, and the distress was ascribed this time, with too much truth, to the bad weather; but that temporary evil passed away, and still the nation suffered; and then they were driven to search for some other cause. It was next attributed to our having too many people; and emigration was proposed as the remedy. We were to ship off our surplus population. But of what did that surplus consist? Not the drones of society. They would have been of no more use abroad than they were at home. No; it was the industrious, the skilful, and the small-capital men of the country that were to be exported; and to show how little of real knowledge, or of sound judgment, was brought to bear on the subject, he would mention the singular fact, that at the time to which he alluded, two Committees were sitting up-stairs, who carried on their deliberations next door to each other, the one for the purpose of preventing more corn from coming into the country, and the

other to send away the months. Too many loaves, and too many men—such was the singular paradox which these Committees attempted to meet. Such were the remedies which, from time to time, had been adopted for these ever-recurring evils. Now, what was the master evil—what was the cause of all their distress—the cause which was even now in operation, and which would certainly not be removed by the propositions that were now before the House? He did not know whether he dared to mention it; but he would throw himself upon the kind indulgence of the House. He never had in that House at any length entered into consideration upon the subject, and he would entreat them to hear him, while he briefly explained what he really thought was the cause of all their distresses, and, having done that, he would leave it. The monster evil was the Currency Bill of 1819. [*Laughter, and cries of "Hear, hear!"*] He knew that it was his misfortune, and a deep and a heavy misfortune he felt it to be, to differ from a large majority of the House; but he would not shrink from stating his opinions in opposition to theirs; for, as long as he held a seat in that House, he felt it to be his duty to declare his opinions. He, therefore, would not shrink from stating as his opinion, that to the Bill of 1819 was to be attributed all those alternations of false prosperity, and consequent reactions of adversity, they had been struggling with. Ever since the Bill of 1819, remedies had been applied to the ever-recurring evils, and applied in vain. They had refused to inquire into the real cause of these evils, and till they did so, they never would find a remedy: and he warned his right hon. Friend (Sir R. Peel) that his present propositions would prove as complete a failure as any of the remedies that had been formerly proposed. They might say Committees had been appointed. But how had those Committees conducted their inquiries? Would it be believed, that on the first inquiry, which was instituted in the House of Lords, the following incident occurred between a noble Lord and a director of the Bank of England. The director was throwing out a hint that it might be a dangerous step to adopt the course then proposed of returning to a gold payment. He was met by Lord Grenville in this curious way. His Lordship said—

"Sir, we sent for you not to tell us of the consequences of returning to a gold standard—not to give an opinion as to the propriety of the attempt;

but we sent for you to ascertain the best way of carrying out this object—an object which we have already resolved upon."

That remark at once shut the mouths of practical men; and those who saw the dangers which were coming were prevented from laying before the country their opinions on this essential point. In order to a real inquiry into the merits of this subject, they must call before them practical men, not pseudo-philosophers—men who bigotedly adhered to abstract principles, without regard to the obstacles that lay in the way of reducing them to practice. He would illustrate his meaning by an idea that just occurred to him. Suppose a man were in a wood on a fine starlight night; he did not know his way out, except generally that his way lay towards the north. He fixed his eye, therefore, upon the polar star, and proceeded confidently onwards, but before going far he came to a deep river over which he could not pass, and thus in spite of himself he was obliged to turn back to the south. That, he thought, was an exact illustration of the value of abstract principles without regard to practical difficulties. Yet this was the course now adopted. They were all for free trade, never minding the difficulties into which these principles and a circulation based on bullion would throw the country; not caring for the destruction of capital, manufactures, and trade: they had resolved to go back to the ancient standard of value, caring nothing for the consequences that ensued, showing that without hesitation they would destroy a nation rather than abandon what they called a principle. He called upon the House not to expect any good from the plans that were now proposed, for he believed they would produce a great and severe aggravation of the evil. He hoped they would rather follow the advice of the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department, who once thought as he now did. It was that right hon. Baronet who taught him on this great subject; and though he might now think proper to dispense with his former speeches and publication, he could not get rid of the impression those speeches and that publication had made upon him. He was the admiring pupil of the hon. Baronet of Netherby. He could not be an unconvinced follower of the right hon. the Secretary of State. But it might be said, what was wrong in the Bill of 1819? He would tell them in a few words. They commenced

the war with a debt of 300,000,000*l.*, and with a trifling depreciation in the currency. They went on, and during the war the debt increased to 800,000,000*l.*, and they had created a depreciation in the currency of more than 33 per cent. What did they do at the end of the war? They resolved at once to go back to the ancient standard of value. They said the public faith required it, and that they had always intended to go back to that ancient standard. But how could hon. Gentlemen hold that opinion when they recollected what took place in 1810 and 1811? In the first of these years, after a debate of five nights, and in the second year, after a debate of six or seven nights, they came to this memorable conclusion—and he was not sure but his right hon. Friend the present First Lord of the Treasury himself had voted for the proposition—that there was no depreciation in the currency—that there was no departure from the standard value—that a 1*l.* note and a shilling were for all legal purposes of equal value with a golden guinea; and yet after this, in 1819, they called upon the country to recognise the depreciation which before they denied to exist. They said that justice required them to return to a point which they formerly declared they had never left, and to find a remedy for an evil which they before declared had no existence. But it ought to be remembered that country gentlemen and others confiding in the Resolution of the House in 1810, had made settlements for their younger children—had entered into mortgages and agreements, having no fear of the country returning to the ancient standard of value, because this House had declared that they had never moved from it. They expected, therefore, that the charges they had made, and the burdens they had consented to, would remain in force to be measured in the currency in which they had been incurred. But these persons were at once turned round upon by the House, who said to them, we must return to the ancient standard of value. But they were not even content with that—they did more than return to the ancient standard of value. The ancient standard consisted of gold and silver jointly, with precautions against melting and exportation. He knew that those precautions were evaded; but he knew that the evasion took place at considerable risk; but now they had altogether thrown the trade of exportation open, and removed the moral checks which formerly

existed; and the effect of the present measure would be to aggravate the evil, as the bullion would more than ever be exported for corn. He knew this was denied on the other side, as it was argued that foreigners would take our manufactures in exchange; but he thought such results would not ensue. Foreigners bringing their corn to this country would have the option of taking the taxed manufactures of this country in exchange; or they had another option, and that they would make use of, of going to the Bank of England for gold, and then carrying that gold away and buying with it the untaxed manufactures of other countries. That was the process which would go on; and he warned his right hon. Friend, that many and great as were the difficulties which pressed upon him now, he would have this one added, that the gold would go out of the country which ought to be spent in the wages of labour at home; causing a want of food on the one hand, and on the other a want of the means of paying the wages of labour. With reference to the subject in hand, he begged to say, that he agreed with his hon. Friends near him on this important point—that protection to native industry was essential to the prosperity of all classes in the country. He would say more—that it was essential to the maintenance of the public credit—essential to the safety of the Crown—essential to the well-being of the community. On what principle could they defend the introduction of foreign labour to compete with home labour, unless the two were placed on equal terms? He believed they were all agreed in this, that taxation fell ultimately upon labour; and therefore he claimed protection, not for any class, but he claimed it for the British labourer; for as he bore a large share of the taxation of this country, no foreigner ought to be permitted to compete with him, unless he contributed the same share to the taxation and the local burdens of the country. That principle this country had always maintained, and it was by the maintenance of that principle that she had risen to such a high station—that she had been enabled to establish her ships, colonies and commerce. He wished to preserve them. It was essential to maintain the principle of protection, if this kingdom were to be, as she had ever been, the mistress of the seas, the envy and admiration of the world. He hailed the passing of the Canadian Corn Bill, for he thought there ought to be free trade with all our

Colonies. They ought to be treated, as what, in fact, they were, parts of the British Empire: like counties, as much an integral portion of the kingdom as Dorsetshire and Hampshire. They had adopted that principle with respect to Canada; but what were they now doing? They were about to take the cup which they had raised to the lips of the Canadians, and to dash it to the ground. Canada was preparing for the new corn trade—she had built mills—she had sown a greater breadth of land; but now the corn to compete with the produce of this country would come not from the Canadians, who would take our manufactures in return, but from countries on the Continent, who would take our gold in return. In illustration of this, he stated that he met, two days ago, a gentleman in a railway carriage near Coventry, who told him that several large orders for watches from Canada had already been countermanded, because the Canadians saw that the necessary effect of the proposed measures would be to stop the importation of corn from Canada. He (Mr. Spooner) thought it right to say, that while he agreed with his hon. Friends near him on the principle of protection, he differed from them on the question of the sliding scale, which he thought militated against the only principle on which protection could be claimed. Protection was claimed and given on this principle, that whatever articles came into this country must bear an equal share of taxation with corresponding productions of this country. Now, that was not the principle of the sliding scale. The duty was not laid according to the taxation bearing on the home produce, but according to the price which the home produce brought in the market. He believed that the sliding scale aggravated the evils of the monetary system, because under it corn was kept up till it reached its highest average, and then a great glut was suddenly let in upon the market. He thought the sliding scale bad in principle, and it had been proved to be bad in practice; but much as he preferred a fixed duty, even that, under the present system of currency, would be totally inefficacious. These, he begged to state, were no new doctrines of his own. They were opinions which had been published in the year 1826 by his right hon. Friend the Home Secretary; and he would assure his right hon. Friend that nothing would remove from his mind the impression his writings had produced; and he would tell his right hon. Friend now, that he did

not believe he would rise and say he had altered his mind. The hon. Gentleman then proceeded to quote the following passages from Sir James Graham's work on *Corn and Currency*:—

"It is impossible to establish a fixed protecting duty with fairness, when the standard of value is itself unfair. This appears to me," said the right hon. Baronet, addressing the landowners, "the very core of the whole subject—the point on which you have committed the most fatal errors. You have fought for high prices, and concurred in measures which render them impossible. You have retained your monopoly, but consented to a change in the value of money, which must destroy its efficacy. The ground which you still endeavour to defend is no longer tenable; and the points which you surrendered, ensure your defeat. If I might venture to allude to the conduct of the landed interest in this last Session of Parliament, I should say, that it affords conclusive evidence of the blindest adherence to the single object of high prices, coupled with an entire misapprehension of the means by which this object might be attained, and of the general principles on which prices must depend. The price of commodities, and of corn amongst the rest, is compounded of two ingredients—of the supply in the market compared with the demand, and also of the value of money; itself the measure of value, liable, however, to great variation, in proportion to its quantity."

He found also that the right hon. Baronet, in speaking of the compact which he affirmed to have been made between the landlords and those who concerted and maintained the monetary measures introduced in 1819, thus expresses himself:—

"For it is well known, that in this last Session (1825) they bargained with the King's Ministers to support the further contraction of the currency, on condition that the Government did not destroy their monopoly by a repeal of the Corn Laws."

And then further, the right hon. Baronet remarked—

"So far from urging the Government to bring separately under the view of the Legislature the questions of currency and corn, it was the decided interest of the landowners to have insisted on a careful revision of both these subjects conjointly. They are in themselves intimately blended; it is absurd to talk of price without reference to money; and it is impossible to alter the quantity of money without affecting prices. Disjointed discussion on these two vital points is the precise cause of the dangerous conclusions now sanctioned by Parliament, which threaten with ruin and degradation the whole class of existing proprietors."

Now, he would appeal to his right hon. Friend, whether he still held those opinions. If his right hon. Friend did not, he hoped, before this debate was brought to a close, his right hon. Friend would give the House some clear and substantial reasons for his change of opinion; and if his right hon. Friend did so, he would not say that he would not be converted, but he

would not surrender his opinions while unconverted, and he must continue to hold his present views. Much had been said of the danger that had pressed upon them a few years ago, when they had a bad trade and high provisions. No one could be more sensible of that danger than he was, living at the time in a manufacturing district, and being an active magistrate in the neighbourhood; but he could tell the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government that the high prices of provisions did not cause the bad state of trade. No, the bad trade arose from circumstances which could be easily explained in Committee, or in that House, if he were not afraid of trespassing upon their indulgence. But if they would give him a Committee to investigate these matters, he would show that that distress had been occasioned by circumstances which would again occur—which had compelled the Bank of England to withdraw the circulating medium to force prices down to the level of the Continent, in order to retain gold in this country. Hence the misery, the discontent, which they all so deeply deplored; and he warned the right hon. Baronet that at no distant period he would see the same distress recurring. The nation was again upon the eve of a great change. Many plans had been tried to cure evils pressing upon the nation, but without avail. A large, sudden, and evanescent amount of trade had recently manifested itself in the country. This could not last. Commerce would again languish; and if the moment recurred when a high price of food followed a reduction of wages, the consequences would not be obviated by such measures as were now introduced by the right hon. Baronet. The evil would then be enhanced by the loss of the gold which would leave the country. That evil would be greatly aggravated by the disappointment which would be felt by the working classes, who were led to expect from the proposed measures a low price of food, and a continuance, at least, of the present rate of wages. In this they would be sorely disappointed. Before he sat down, he would say a few words to his noble and hon. Friends on his right hand, who more immediately represented the landed interest. Did they wish that the aristocracy should maintain the position they had so long held—a position essential to the preservation of our ancient institutions—the integrity of the Constitution, and the safety of the Crown? Did they wish to retain their

title and estates, and to hand them down inviolate to their descendants? Let them examine this question, use the power they possessed, and force the Ministers to institute a searching inquiry into the cause of the evils of which they complained. They must not trust to a continuance of the system which had ever proved, and would prove, inefficient for the purposes for which they advocated it. He would call also on the fundholder, if he wished his property to be rendered safe, and if he desired that public credit should continue unassailed, to oppose the measure now before the House, and to join the landlords in compelling the Minister to institute inquiry. He called upon the merchant and manufacturer, if they desired to secure a trade to themselves and their dependents, by which steady profits were to be realized, and to put down that system of wild speculation by which, though some had made large fortunes, multitudes had been ruined—to join in calling for and in forcing this inquiry. To the statesman he would say—if he were desirous to restore harmony, to put an end to the unconstitutional proceedings of the Anti-Corn-Law League, and to other dangerous meetings—if he wished, by restoring prosperity to all classes, to maintain peace, safety, and prosperity—to yield this inquiry, and no longer delude himself by expecting efficiently to remedy the evils under which we had so long suffered, while a system was maintained that had so long been the great monster evil, aggravating every other evil, and paralysing every remedy. The hon. Member concluded by submitting his Motion to the House.

SIR G. CLERK said, the original Motion, to which the hon. Member had moved an Amendment, was, that they should take into consideration the Report upon certain Resolutions which had been agreed to in a Committee of that House, for the purpose of making alterations in the duties levied upon the importation of certain articles of Customs. Before that Report was brought up, numerous petitions had been presented to that House, setting forth the inconvenience which every description of trade in the country was suffering in consequence of the uncertainty which prevailed as to whether any or what reductions were to take place. He believed, though a difference of opinion might exist as to some of the propositions included in the Resolutions before the House, yet that with respect to the propriety of a very large proportion of

these reductions in duty, there was no difference of opinion whatever. The hon. Member for Birmingham, the representative of one of the greatest manufacturing and commercial towns in the country, had professed to meet those Resolutions by proposing that they should be reported that day six months; but the main argument of his speech was that a great mistake had been committed some years ago with regard to the arrangement of the monetary system of the country; and he contended that a Committee should be appointed to inquire whether all the causes of the distress of the country were not owing to the measure of 1819? It was no doubt a matter of the greatest importance to this country that our currency and monetary system should be placed upon a substantial and sure foundation; but he confessed he was extremely surprised that upon that occasion, when every hour was of consequence, the hon. Member should have attempted to divert the attention of the House from the question properly before it to that subject. He should have thought that the hon. Member would have attempted to have shown that some injurious consequences would have arisen to the country in consequence of the adoption of certain of these measures. [Mr. SPOONER: I intend to do so by and by.] If the hon. Member meant to do so by and by, he felt it to be quite unnecessary to consume the time of the House now. He was obliged to the hon. Member for saying that this was only a preliminary step. When the hon. Member referred to particular items, he should feel bound to state the reasons which had induced Her Majesty's Government to propose these reductions. As it was, after the explanation which the hon. Member had given, he felt that he should be only wasting the time of the House if he went on now.

Mr. NEWDEGATE did not know whether many hon. Members were aware of the fact, that contemporaneously with the introduction of these great free-trade measures a Bill had been proposed and read a second time for extending the operation of the Bill of 1819 (of which the hon. Member for Birmingham complained) to Scotland and Ireland. The course adopted by the Government was this—that whilst they brought in measures to expose our domestic industry to foreign competition, and thereby to reduction of price, they at the same time introduced measures restrictive of the currency, which would also depress prices;

thereby doubly attacking native industry and the value of its products. He knew the subject was distasteful to the House; but he was quite confident that they could not fully appreciate the effect of any great measures like the present, which would cause a considerable reduction in the price of the articles produced by the labour of the country, if they looked solely at the question of price as a matter between the supply and demand for those articles, and knew nothing of the relation of the medium of exchange to articles which were to be exchanged; for price consisted of two elements: the relation of the articles to be exchanged to each other; and, secondly, of their relation to the medium of exchange—of the value to be given by each party for the use of it. Those who considered price without reference to this second element, saw only half its bearing.

Mr. SPOONER did not wish to press his Motion to a division. He only desired to point out the real aspect of matters, and in some degree to point attention to the injury which had arisen from measures that had hitherto been passed. He would, therefore, withdraw the Motion he had proposed.

Amendment withdrawn. Resolutions to be read a second time.

On the Question that Bronze Manufactures not enumerated, be charged with a duty for every 100*l.* value 10*l.*.

Mr. SPOONER said, that if the proposed reduction of duty with regard to articles of bronze of foreign manufacture were agreed to, several valuable manufactories in Birmingham would be destroyed, and a great many men thrown out of employment. He would move the omission of the article, and that the present duty be retained.

Mr. MUNTZ hoped his hon. Colleague would withdraw his Motion. He could not understand upon what principle they could abolish protection as regarded land, and not as regarded manufactures. He had told his constituents that if the duty on foreign corn were taken off, they would have to submit to the duty on foreign manufactures being reduced, or perhaps abolished. He had called upon them to deliberate upon the subject, and to decide one way or the other, and they had accordingly decided on trying the policy of reduction. The only fault which he found with that policy was, that the whole of the protective duties were not equally reduced, and upon that point he begged to ask the right hon.

Baronet opposite whether he would take measures at the end of three years for accomplishing that object?

SIR R. PEELE would answer the questions of both hon. Gentlemen. The first hon. Member for Birmingham had stated that if the protective duty on foreign bronze articles were reduced from 15*l.* to 10*l.*, several bronze manufacturers in Birmingham would be ruined. Now what had been the effect of the present duty? The whole amount of duty paid on the importation of articles of bronze of foreign manufacture during the last year was only 78*l.* They were now going to continue a duty of 10 per cent., and the hon. Gentleman had undertaken to prophesy that the bronze manufacturers of Birmingham would be ruined. He hoped that prediction would be recorded, for it would, perhaps, be worth while to remember it. He would venture to say, that with a duty on the foreign article of 10 per cent., the bronze manufactures of Birmingham would not be ruined; and that in a year hence the amount of duty paid, though it might exceed 78*l.*, would not be such as to cause the slightest apprehension. With respect to the question of the other hon. Member for Birmingham, he thought he had very wisely dissented from the opinion of his Colleague. The hon. Member had asked him the question which the noble Lord opposite had asked him the other night—viz., whether he was prepared to fix any particular period when the protection now continued should terminate? That was a question for the consideration of Parliament. If the hon. Gentleman and those who represented the manufacturing interest should come forward and say that there should be a particular time at which such protection should absolutely cease, he was not at all sure that he would not acquiesce in their views.

MR. MUNTZ wished for free trade in the true sense of the word, and thought that as the duty had been reduced on the manufactured article, the duty on copper ore, a raw material, should also be reduced.

MR. NEWDEGATE said, that upon the question now before the House, he wished to observe that he had consulted a portion of his constituency residing in Birmingham, because he had, of course, been desirous of not advancing opinions on matters on which he did not possess the opinions of practical persons; and he could assure the House that, day by day, as the measure was more

fully seen, so, day by day, did the opinion gain ground that distress must follow, if passed into a law; and that those who felt its effects would not easily be able to recover the injury it must do them. In support of the statement made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, he would read a letter to the House he had received from a person to whom he had applied for information: not feeling himself capable of affording a practical opinion, he had obtained the judgment of one far better versed than himself in the matter. This letter, as he had before observed, would support the statement made by one of the hon. Members for the town of Birmingham; and it had emanated from one of the largest manufacturers in the place, who said he had also consulted several of the principal merchants there, and their conviction was, that in those cases—

“Where much manual labour was required, free competition with France, Belgium, and Prussia, would be very injurious, and unless we obtained reciprocal favours, would, in many instances, be ruinous,” the labour there being so much cheaper. The writer added—“The greater part of the Birmingham and Sheffield articles are now prohibited from entering France; and on the remainder the duties are so great that very few of any kind are sent; pretty nearly the same is the case in Prussia and Belgium; the duties on all English manufactured articles have been increased within the last few years in every country in Europe, and the greatest possible efforts are being made by each Government to supply their own wants.”

The document he had read might be taken as a true index of the opinion held by his constituents in the town of Birmingham, and fully corroborated the statement made by one of the hon. Members for that town.

MR. STAFFORD O'BRIEN trusted that the hon. Member for Birmingham would not press his Amendment. At the same time he must say, that the Resolution recognised a principle which by right should be extended to the farmer. Although the right hon. Baronet would not say when he would take off the remaining duties, he must ask what chance any other duty had of being maintained merely as a protection, and not as a revenue duty, now that the keystone—as hon. Gentlemen opposite called it—of protection was gone. The right hon. Baronet said, he expected to see the time when the manufacturers would come and ask him to take off all remaining protective duties; but even there he showed more regard to the manufacturers than he had done to the farmers, for he had not heard that the farmers had yet gone up in procession to the right hon.

Baronet to implore him to take away their protection. As the right hon. Baronet claimed credit for being so far-sighted, perhaps he was also clear-sighted; in that case, the right hon. Gentleman would be conferring an obligation upon him (Mr. S. O'Brien) and his friends, by explaining by what process he proposed to distinguish buck-wheat meal from wheat meal. He would challenge any man, even the right hon. Baronet the Member for Stamford, who generally saw as far into a millstone as any man, to distinguish the one from the other by their appearance.

On the Question that the duty on Bronze Powder be 10*l*.,

MR. T. DUNCOMBE said, it would be in the recollection of the House, that he had presented a petition, signed by 500 of the paper-stainers of the metropolis, complaining of the proposed reduction of duty on foreign paper. It was but fair that some equivalent should be given to them; and as bronze powder was an article much used in paper-staining, he would propose that it should be allowed to come in duty free. With regard to the reduction of the duty on foreign paper, he believed that the rich alone would be benefited by it. On the common paper the duty would be prohibitory, and the only paper that would come in would be that which would be used in such houses as those in Grosvenor Square. At the present moment, he was sorry to state, that a great number of the employers of these paper-stainers had given notice to their men, that they did not intend that any loss which might arise from the proposed reduction should come out of their profits, but that it should come out of the wages of those whom they employed. A manufacturer at Islington, who employed about sixty hands, had given such a notice; and in another establishment conditional orders had been accepted, the employers holding back one-fifth of the men's wages until the Tariff was settled. In the event of its being passed, one-fifth would be deducted from the wages of these parties, and that he thought would be very unfair towards them. In 1842 the duty was 1*s*. It was then proposed to reduce it to 3*d*.; but, in consequence of representations which were made to the right hon. Baronet opposite, it was allowed to remain unaltered. It was now proposed to reduce it to 2*d*., and with such a duty the paper-stainers of this country believed that they would not be able to compete with the foreigner. On the best sort of paper made

in this country there was an excise duty of 2½*d*., while the foreigner paid no excise duty at all; and he thought that if any alteration was to be made, the paper-stainers should at least be allowed to import bronze powder duty free, it being, as he had stated, much used in their trade.

SIR G. CLERK said, he had recently received a deputation from the paper-stainers on the present subject, to whom he had explained that what they had to pay in this country in the way of excise duties did not by any means act as an injury to them, in consequence of the extent of the virtual protection which their manufacture enjoyed. With respect to the bronze powder of Birmingham, it had been admitted that that article had recently so much improved that it was now generally used in this country in preference to that of foreign production. That body had also allowed that with respect to design, the foreign manufacturers generally excelled them; and the acknowledgment of inferiority in this respect, on their parts, was calculated to encourage the public to patronise the foreign manufacture in preference to the home. But he considered that the best mode by which the manufacturers of this country would improve in the matter of design, was by exposing them to compete with the foreign manufacturer.

MR. ALDERMAN THOMPSON considered the silk weavers, the hatters, the boot and shoe makers, as well as the paper-stainers and every other home manufacturer, would have equally to complain of this foreign competition.

Motion agreed to.

Upon the Question, that Butter the cwt. 10*s*. stand part of the Resolution,

MR. GROGAN objected to any reduction of the import duties upon butter. He said it formed, if he might so speak, almost the staple manufacture of many parts of Ireland, and that even with the present rate of duty the Irish farmers were barely able to compete with foreigners. Now, then, he would ask, could they expect to do so when the duty was reduced from 21*s*. to 10*s*., as proposed by Her Majesty's Government? He argued that the effect of this reduction would be to drive Irish butter almost entirely out of the market; and he could not conceive how any Irish Member could with propriety support the proposition of the Government to reduce the duty. From the years 1827 to 1841, the exportation of Irish butter in Portugal had decreased from 29,909 cwt. to

5,900 cwt., whilst the importation of foreign butter into this country during the same period had increased. Under these circumstances he thought it was not unreasonable to ask, that protection should be continued upon butter and cheese. In 1842, when the Tariff was under consideration in that House, it was considered as an act of justice to Ireland, that the articles of butter and cheese should not be interfered with. He could not see now, why, under a pretext of impending famine, the Government should endeavour to deprive Ireland of one of her most desirable sources of industry. He was surprised that Irish Members had not raised their voices against this proposition; but as they had not, he should do so, and should endeavour to exclude both cheese and butter from the Tariff. He should oppose the Motion.

SIR G. CLERK was not surprised at the opposition of the hon. Member to the proposed reduction of duty upon cheese and butter, especially when he considered, as had been observed by the hon. Member, that they formed the staple manufacture of Ireland. The hon. Member had stated that no reduction was made in the duties upon these articles in the Tariff of 1842, because it would have been considered an act of injustice to Ireland to have done so. Now, he begged to state, that the sole ground upon which his right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government resisted the Motion of the noble Lord opposite, was solely upon the ground of revenue, the amount of duty being 200,000*l.* per annum. He would refer the hon. Member, however, to the state of the butter trade up to the year 1816, when the duty upon foreign butter was not more than 3*s.* per cwt., and up to which time the butter trade in Ireland flourished; and looking to the increase in that trade in Ireland since 1816, he could not see reason to apprehend danger from the importation of foreign butter. The hon. Member had stated that the exportation of Irish butter to foreign countries had decreased; but he had not stated the quantity which had been sent from Ireland into Great Britain. Now the fact was, that the article of butter being one of prime and necessary consumption in this country, had increased in a greater proportion than the increase of population. Unfortunately, in 1825 there was no official account of the quantity of butter imported into this country from Ireland; but it had been ascer-

tained upon data on which perfect reliance might with safety be placed, that the quantity of butter imported into Great Britain from Ireland, from 1825 to 1837, had nearly doubled, being not less at the present time than 1,000,000 cwt. The price of foreign butter imported into England was, and always had been, regulated entirely by the price of the English markets. It was well known that when trade was prosperous generally throughout the manufacturing districts, that a larger quantity of butter was required than this country was able to produce; it was, therefore, necessary for them to get a supply from other sources; but he thought, that instead of the competition of the foreigner, in the article of butter, having an injurious effect upon the Irish producer, it would tend to stimulate him to greater exertions to improve by every means in his power the manufacture of so necessary an article of life; and if this was the result, he could only say, that the Irish would have nothing to apprehend from foreign competition, more especially with a protective duty of 10*s.* per cwt., which he considered quite ample. He believed the result of this proposition would be, that Irish butter would be so improved as to be able to compete with the best foreign butter produced. He admitted, however, that, considering the article of butter to be one of necessity, the duty was only to be justified on account of the large amount of revenue.

MR. J. TOLLEMACHE hoped the hon. Member for Dublin would press the question to a division; and if he did not, he should himself feel it necessary to take the sense of the House on the proposed duty.

SIR R. H. INGLIS said, that the right hon. Baronet the Vice-President of the Board of Trade had stated that, after all, the hon. Member for Dublin need not be alarmed, for no great deal of butter would be imported. This reduction involved the alternative, that if no more butter was imported than last year, there would be a loss of revenue; but if there was double the quantity imported, it would compete successfully with our own production, which was deprived of protection.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said, that the hon. Baronet had only considered the producers, but the Government would not forget the consumer. By this reduction revenue was risked, but he was confident that it would be made up by increased consumption; nor would the increased importation injure the agricul-

tural interest, for such an injury depended on the quantity produced at home, as compared with the importation; but when the quantity of butter consumed was considered, he was sure the hon. Baronet would feel that care should be taken that there should be no scarcity of that article. It was one of those articles which constituted a comfort of the lower classes, and no such importation would ensue as would injure the agricultural interest. When he resisted the reduction of this duty on former occasions, he did so distinctly on the ground of revenue, which was so large that he could not afford to lose it, but now that there was a relaxation of duties, it ought to be among the first.

LORD G. BENTINCK said: If, Sir, one argument more conclusive than another could have been produced, why we should have rejected the proposition of the Government in regard to this article, it was that of the right hon. Gentleman (Sir G. Clerk) who begins by telling you that it is the staple manufacture of Ireland on which it is proposed to reduce the existing protection by one-half; and of which, as he believes, incredible as the statement appears, 1,000,000 cwt. are annually imported from Ireland into this country. Why, good God! Sir, the price of butter, as the right hon. Gentleman says, is 80s. per cwt.; and, if you are going to decrease the protection by 10s. on 1,000,000 cwt. of butter, the amount lost to Ireland—if Ireland suffers the whole loss—will amount to 500,000*l.* Well, Sir, and if you are not going to reduce the price of butter by taking off protection, of what good will the reduction be to the consumer? If the reduction is to be productive of any advantage to the English consumer, you must reduce the price by reducing the protection. Therefore, I have a right to presume that the object of Her Majesty's Ministers, and the object of this House in giving up an amount of duty little short of 125,000*l.* per annum, must be to reduce the price of butter; and, if you do that, you must injure Ireland in a corresponding degree. I should have thought, Sir, that this was not the time when we should be disposed to carry any measures that could by possibility prove injurious to Ireland. We are told, Sir, that Ireland is, if not in a state of actual famine, at least in great distress; and we are called upon, and we willingly respond to that call, to vote a sum of 230,000*l.* for the purpose of relieving, by public expenditure, the people of that

portion of the Empire. If the position of the sister country is then so critical a one, is this the moment, I ask, in which we ought to carry measures that may injure her to the amount of half a million sterling per year? Which are the counties that produce the greatest quantity of butter in Ireland? The county of Cork is, I believe, more celebrated than any other. [Hon. MEMBERS: Kerry and Carlow.] Well, Kerry, Cork, and Carlow. Now, what has been the statement made a few days ago, by one who ought to be a good authority upon Irish matters—the "*Times* Commissioner?" We see it stated by the "*Times* Commissioner," that he had it from the authority of the secretary to the savings bank at Cork, that the small agriculturists—the conacre farmers, I believe they are called—the "*frieze-coats*" of the county of Cork, within a circuit of twenty miles round the city, have laid by no less a sum than 200,000*l.* in savings alone in the course of the last year. Upon this authority, we find that the small farmers of the county of Cork have saved 200,000*l.*, which, we are told, amounts upon an average to 34*l.* each. So that such is the flourishing state of the county of Cork under protective laws—under protection to the agriculture of Ireland, and protection to Irish produce of all descriptions, wheat, oats, and, above all, butter—that no less a number than 6,000 small farmers have been able to lay by from their savings 34*l.* each within a year. And are you now going, by making an alteration in those laws, to check the prosperity of that large number of industrious agriculturists? I think, Sir, it would be unwise to choose this as the moment in which to withdraw protection from Irish butter. What says the right hon. Gentleman (the Chancellor of the Exchequer)? Why, he tells us whatever may be the duty upon butter, that exactly the same amount of Dutch butter will be imported? In God's name, then, why not take the duty from the Dutch? I cannot understand the principle upon which Her Majesty's Ministers are proceeding. They fling duties away in large sums—125,000*l.* on butter, and 70,000*l.* on cheese—without any object that I can understand, unless it is to bring foreign produce into competition with English and with Irish produce. I could understand them if they flung away the malt duty—a tax amounting to 60 per cent. on the raw material; but they seem to be in no hurry to reduce that. The reduction of the duty

on malt would be a measure of relief exclusively conferred upon the English producer and consumer. Yes, the drinkers of beer and the barley growers would divide the entire benefit, and therefore it is that Her Majesty's Ministers will not for the world touch the Malt Tax. If the object of reducing duties is to relieve the consumer, I beg of hon. Gentlemen to say whether they do not think a reduction of the duty upon tea would not be as advantageous to the consumer as a reduction of duty upon butter. Yet Her Majesty's Ministers do not propose to reduce the duty upon tea; and why have they not made such a proposition? Why, for no reason that I can see, except that tea does not come into competition with the produce of Great Britain. Well, then, Sir, the right hon. Gentleman says, "Oh, depend upon it, the reduction will not injure Ireland; Ireland has a protective duty of 3s. per cwt." Why, has the right hon. Gentleman forgotten that Great Britain was at war with almost the whole of Europe for twenty years before; and was not that a sufficient protection to Ireland? Was there an opportunity of importing butter from Holland, or from any other country? These, Sir, are the reasons why I cordially concur in the opposition to this article being admitted into the schedule now before us.

The House divided on the Question, that Butter 10s. cwt. stand part of the Resolution:—Ayes 213; Noes 111: Majority 102.

List of the AYES.

Acland, T. D.	Bright, John	Dennistoun, J.	M'Carthy, A.
A'Court, Capt.	Brotherton, J.	D'Eyncourt, rt. hon. C. T.	M'Geachy, F. A.
Agillonby, H. A.	Browne, hon. W.	Dickinson, F. H.	M'Taggart, Sir J.
Ainsworth, P.	Bruce, Lord Ernest	Divett, E.	Mahon, Viset.
Aldam, W.	Huller, Charles	Douglas, Sir C. E.	Mangles, R. D.
Anson, hon. Col.	Busefield, William	Drummond, H. H.	Marshall, W.
Baillie, Col.	Butler, P. S.	Duke, Sir J.	Martin, J.
Baillie, H. J.	Cardwell, E.	Duncan, Viset.	Martin, C. W.
Baine, W.	Cavendish, hon. G. H.	Duncan, G.	Masterman, J.
Bannerman, A.	Chapman, R.	Duneannon, Viset.	Matheson, J.
Barklay, D.	Chichester, Lord	Duncombe, T.	Maule, rt. hon. F.
Barkly, H.	Christie, W. D.	Dundas, Adm.	Meynell, Capt.
Baring, rt. hon. F. T.	Clay, Sir W.	Eastnor, Viset.	Mildmay, H. St. John
Baring, T.	Clerk, rt. hon. Sir G.	Ellice, rt. hon. E.	Milnes, R. M.
Baring, rt. hon. W. B.	Colden, R.	Ellis, Wynn	Mitealfe, H.
Barnard, E. G.	Cochrane, A.	Elphinstone, H.	Mitchell, T. A.
Berkeley, hon. C.	Cockburn, rt. hon. Sir G.	Escott, B.	Moffatt, G.
Berkeley, hon. Capt.	Colebrooke, Sir T. E.	Euwall, R.	Molesworth, Sir W.
Bernal, Ralph	Corry, rt. hon. H.	Evans, W.	Morris, D.
Blake, M. J.	Craig, W. G.	Evans, Sir De L.	Morrison, Gen.
Bodkin, W. H.	Crawford, W. S.	Ewart, W.	Morrison, J.
Bosfield, Beriah	Cripps, W.	Ferguson, Col.	Mostyn, hon. E. M. L.
Bouserie, hon. E.	Currie, Raikes	Fitzroy, hon. H.	Muntz, G. F.
Bowen, John	Curtela, H. H.	Flower, Sir J.	Napier, Sir C.
Bowles, Adm.	Dalmeny, Lord	Forster, M.	O'Connell, D.
Bowering, Dr.	Dalrymple, Capt.	Fox, Charles R.	O'Connell, M. J.
Briggesman, H.	Dawson, hon. T. V.	Gisborne, T.	O'Connell, J.
		Gill, T.	Ord, W.
		Gibson, T. M.	Osborne, R.
		Gore, M.	Palmerston, Viset.
		Gore, hon. R.	Parker, John
		Goulburn, H.	Patten, J. W.
		Graham, rt. hon. Sir J.	Pechell, Capt.
		Greene, T.	Peel, rt. hon. Sir R.
		Grey, rt. hon. Sir G.	Peel, J.
		Hall, Sir B.	Plumridge, Capt.
		Hamilton, W. J.	Price, H.
		Hamilton, Lord C.	Rawdon, Col.
		Hastie, A.	Reid, Sir J. R.
		Hatton, Capt. V.	Reid, Col.
		Hawes, R.	Russell, Lord J.
		Hayer, W. G.	Russell, Lord E.
		Heathcoat, J.	Scott, Robert
		Herbert, rt. hon. S.	Serape, G. P.
		Hill, Lord M.	Seymour, Lord
		Hindley, C.	Seymour, Sir H. B.
		Hobhouse, rt. hon. Sir J.	Smith, Benj.
		Hogg, J. W.	Smith, J. A.
		Holland, R.	Smith, rt. hon. R. V.
		Hornby, John	Smythe, hon. G.
		Horsman, E.	Smollett, A.
		Howard, hon. C. W. G.	Somerville, Sir W. M.
		Howard, P. H.	Stansfield, W. R. C.
		Howard, Sir R.	Stanton, W. H.
		Hughes, W. B.	Stuart, Lord J.
		Hume, Joseph	Stuart, H.
		Humphery, Ald.	Strickland, Sir G.
		Huti, W.	Strutt, E.
		James, W.	Tancred, H. W.
		James, Sir W. C.	Thesiger, Sir F.
		Jermyn, Earl	Thornely, T.
		Jervis, John	Tollenaache, hon. F. J.
		Jocelyn, Viset.	Tomline, G.
		Johnstone, H.	Towneley, J.
		Kelly, Sir Fitz Roy	Trail, G.
		Labouchere, rt. hon. H.	Trclawny, J. S.
		Laseelles, hon. W. S.	Trench, Sir F. W.
		Loch, James	Tuffnell, H.
		Lockhart, A. E.	Villiers, hon. C.
		Lyall, George	Vivian, J. H.
		Macaulay, rt. hon. T. B.	Vivian, hon. Capt.
		Mackinnon, W. A.	Wakley, T.
		Macnamara, Major	Wall, C. B.

Warburton, H.
Ward, H. G.
Wawn, J. T.
Wellesley, Lord C.
White, S.
Williams, W.
Wilshere, W.
Wood, C.

Wood, Col. T.
Worsley, Lord
Wortley, hon. J. S.
Wyse, T.
Yorke, hon. E.
TELLERS.
Young, R.
Baring, H.

List of the NOES.

Acton, Col.
Alford, Visct.
Allix, John P.
Antrobus, E.
Arbuthnot, hon. H.
Archbold, R.
Arkwright, G.
Austin, Col.
Bagge, W.
Baillie, W.
Baldwin, B.
Bankes, G.
Barrington, Visct.
Bateson, T.
Bell, M.
Benett, J.
Bennett, P.
Bentinck, Lord G.
Bentinck, Lord H.
Beresford, Major
Borthwick, P.
Bramston, T. W.
Broadley, H.
Broadwood, H.
Brooke, Lord
Bruce, C. L. C.
Buck, L. W.
Chandos, Marq. of
Christopher, R. A.
Churchill, Lord A. S.
Chute, W. L. W.
Clayton, R. R.
Cole, hon. H. A.
Compton, H. C.
Courtenay, Lord
Deedes, W.
Disraeli, B.
Dodd, G.
Douglas, Sir H.
Duckworth, Sir J. T. B.
Duncombe, hon. A.
Duncombe, hon. O.
Du Pre, C. G.
Fellows, E.
Finch, G.
Fitzmaurice, hon. W.
Floyer, J.
Forbes, W.
Frewen, C. H.
Fuller, A. E.
Gore, W. O.
Granby, Marq. of
Halford, Sir H.
Hall, Col.
Halsey, T. P.
Harris, hon. Capt.
Heathcote, G. J.

Henley, J. W.
Hildyard, T. B. T.
Hinde, J. H.
Hodgson, F.
Hodgson, R.
Hope, A.
Hudson, G.
Hurst, R. H.
Hussey, T.
Inglis, Sir R. H.
Irton, S.
Jolliffe, Sir W. G. H.
Jones, Capt.
Knight, F. W.
Knightley, Sir C.
Law, hon. C. E.
Lennox, Lord G. H. G.
Liddell, hon. H. T.
Loekhart, W.
Lowther, hon. Col.
Mackenzie, T.
Maclean, D.
Manners, Lord J.
March, Earl of
Miles, P. W. S.
Miles, W.
Mundy, E. M.
Neeld, J.
Neeld, J.
Newdegate, C. N.
Newport, Visct.
O'Brien, A. S.
Ossulston, Lord
Packer, C. W.
Palmer, R.
Palmer, G.
Pigot, Sir R.
Rashleigh, W.
Rendlesham, Lord
Repton, G. W. J.
Rolleston, Col.
Seymer, H. K.
Shaw, rt. hon. F.
Sibthorp, Col.
Sotherton, T. H. S.
Spooner, R.
Spry, Sir S. T.
Thompson, Ald.
Tyrell, Sir J. T.
Vyse, H. R. H.
Waddington, H. S.
Walpole, S. H.
Williams, T. P.
Yorke, hon. E. T.
TELLERS.
Grogan, E.
Tollemache, J.

tion of duty on foreign buttons. He was of opinion that unless protection was continued for this branch of manufactures, our trade would suffer materially from German competition. He would not divide the House upon the subject, but content himself by recording his opposition to buttons being included in the schedule.

SIR R. PEEL said, that when the duty received on buttons was 15*l.* per cent. the amount of revenue derivable therefrom had been 9*l.* Under those circumstances, he could not see what apprehensions the button manufacturers could feel by reducing the duty to 10*l.* If his hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham (Mr. Spooner) thought the difference proposed would injure the trade, he (Sir R. Peel) could not agree with him. His hon. Friend really did not give Birmingham fair play.

Question agreed to.

On the Question, that Cotton Articles, or manufactures of cotton, wholly or in part made up, not otherwise charged with duty for every 100*l.* value, 10*l.*, stand part of the Resolution,

SIR H. HALFORD said, that with regard to the abatement of duty on cotton stockings, from 20 to 10 per cent., the reduction would have a most injurious tendency upon an important article of manufacture in the midland counties. As the Representative of an agricultural and manufacturing district, and connected with land in the midland counties, he would oppose any abatement of duty on cotton hosiery. The present was, he considered, a matter deeply interesting to agriculture in those counties, because the operatives employed in framework knitting in the counties of Leicester and Nottingham, resided for the most part in the country villages in the vicinity of towns, and were dependent upon the poor rates levied upon land, and not upon manufactories, when out of employment. Thus, any abatement in duty likely to cause a less demand for home produce, would have the effect of materially injuring this important branch of native industry. He could refer to documents quoted in that House to show what opinion competent witnesses had formed with respect to the withdrawal of protection from the framework knitters of the midland counties. The hon. Baronet read a portion of the evidence taken before a Commission appointed to inquire into the state of the framework knitters in the counties of Leicester and Nottingham, and proceeded to say that 100,000 persons

On the Question, that Button Metal for every 100*l.* value, 10*l.*, stand part of the Resolution,

MR. SPOONER objected to a reduc-

were employed in the manufacture of cotton hosiery, and that the sum of 2,287,000*l.* was annually paid in wages. The exports for the three years, including 1814-15-16, amounted to 575,872 dozen pairs, and the value to 1,156,022*l.*; while during the ten years from 1834 to 1843, the average declared value fell from 1,136,022*l.* to 410,408*l.* This falling-off was to be traced to Saxon competition; for the home consumer, to meet the low prices of the foreign article, resorted to the manufacture of a fraudulent article in order to compete successfully. The fruits of this competition resulted in an article of so inferior a description, that the manufacture got into discredit, and consequently the demand became gradually less and less. So successful had the Germans also been in producing gloves of a superior description, that gloves could be imported into England at half the price they sold for here. It was not at all unusual for a respectable London and New York house to import gloves from Germany for the wholesale trade. The trade of the framework knitters had declined between 30 and 40 per cent. since 1815; and abundant evidence could be adduced to show the distress that prevailed among the persons employed in that branch of manufactures. If this abatement of duty took place, coupled with free trade in corn, the distress of the frameloom operatives would be considerably augmented; because the experience of past years testified that when the price of provisions was low, wages declined in direct ratio; and the condition of the operative population became much aggravated. He saw nothing in anticipation but misery—that misery and ruin which would follow from the competition that would result from the proposed measure. There was much said on the subject of British industry, and on the skill and perseverance of British workmen: that was all true; but the persons who indulged in that species of argument, were not those who would feel the pressure—as that pressure could only be fully felt by the operative, whose interests would be affected by the removal of that protection to which he was entitled.

Mr. GILBORNE did not rise for the purpose of contradicting the statement made by the hon. Baronet as to the misery of the framework knitters; on the contrary, he fully concurred with him that their situation could not be worse; but for many years previous he knew it had not been better. This knowledge he obtained from a long residence among them; and he

feared that no measure could be introduced that would cause that branch of trade again to flourish. If anything could alleviate the misery which the hon. Baronet so truly described, it was, in his opinion, the opening of the ports, and giving to those suffering tradesmen food at the lowest price. He did not believe they were adverse to the proposed measures of Her Majesty's Government; he could say, that neither from his constituents, nor any other parties connected with the hosiery trade, had he received any remonstrance against those measures; and he was firmly convinced that the only chance left for the revival of that branch of manufacture, was the carrying into immediate and full effect the system of unshackled free trade.

COLONEL ROLLESTON could not understand the argument that if the operatives of the hosiery trade had suffered so much under protection, the reduction of protection one-half could remedy the evil which all admitted to exist. He could not think how hon. Gentlemen who adopted such an argument, could reconcile to their own minds what involved so apparent a contradiction. But however they might reconcile it to their own minds, or endeavour at present to explain it away to the operatives, the time would come when their interests would be so materially affected as to convince all parties of their mistake. The subject then before the House was one of no ordinary interest, as it concerned a very large class of the community; and, being so, it should not be hastily legislated on. It demanded serious attention—it required due consideration—especially when it was well known that of the working classes in manufacturing districts, even in a single town, there were no less than one thousand families totally dependent for relief either on public charity or the workhouse. Under such circumstances, the proposition of the right hon. Baronet should be well considered before ultimately decided on; a proposition, the tendency of which would be to effect a greater depression. For his part, after giving the subject due consideration, and knowing the injurious effects which must follow, he would enter against the reduction of the present protection his most decided protest.

Mr. R. M. MILNES would feel it his duty to divide the House on the subject. An unjust accusation had been thrown out against those on this side of the House, that because they were themselves deprived of protection they were indifferent about

the interests of others. He was quite sure so unworthy a sentiment never passed through their minds. Before, therefore, they would give up the cause of the hosier and the handloom weaver; before they would declare their case hopeless, they should make an effort for the continuance of that protection which they now enjoyed.

SIR G. CLERK said, that the House must regret to hear of the melancholy picture that had been drawn by the hon. Baronet behind him (Sir H. Halford); but they must still remember that this was the state of things as they had existed under a system of complete protection. The hon. Member for Leicestershire had stated that the number of persons employed in the hosiery trade was 100,000; and that, a very short time ago, they had exported goods to the value of one million sterling. [Sir H. HALFORD: In 1815.] That in 1815 they had exported goods to the value of one million sterling; but that their exports had since been reduced to four hundred thousand pounds. He had attributed that falling-off to the fact of fraudulent goods having injured the character of English goods in the foreign market. But the House would observe that the prosperity of the trade depended on its competition with the foreign trade; for if the labours of the framework knitters of Leicester and Nottingham were confined to the home market, they must remain in the greatest state of destitution; 100,000 persons being employed in the trade. The only chance of improving their condition would be by giving them a foreign trade. It was useless to prevent the introduction into this country of hosiery goods, unless means were taken to give them a foreign market; otherwise they would do no good to the framework knitters of Leicester and Nottingham. The House must consider whether these measures would have a tendency to extend the foreign trade. If so, they would confer a benefit on the framework knitters, as well as on the other manufactures of this country. For it was not competition, which the hon. Member for Leicestershire said had been the cause of their misery, but their exclusion from foreign markets. Under these circumstances, even if a complete protection were given them, and they were satisfied with the monopoly of the home market, they would be effectually prevented from introducing those improvements into the manufacture by which only they would be enabled to compete with foreign manufac-

tures. The whole amount of duty received under the 20 per cent., had been only 700*l.*, showing that it was quite insignificant. Believing that the continuance of the protection would not in the slightest degree benefit the operatives, he could not consent to any alteration in the proposal.

MR. STRUTT had attended a great meeting of the manufacturers of the midland counties, a few years ago, at Derby, at which statements were made as to the condition of their trade; and those statements were equally unfavourable with those the House had now heard; and yet the object of that meeting was to petition for the abolition of the Corn Laws, and the general freedom of trade. The ground the manufacturers took on that occasion was this. They said—"We are now placed under certain disadvantages, compared to foreign countries, by the operation of the Corn Laws, combined with the restrictions laid on our trade: we have thus been, from year to year, driven out of foreign markets; our profits have been thereby reduced, and our operatives have been brought to the melancholy state in which they now are." Their object was not to petition for any protection whatever, but simply to ask that they should be placed on the same footing as the manufacturers of other nations; that they should have the same means of obtaining food, and be placed exactly on the same footing; and then, they stated, they should not be afraid of entering into fair competition.

MR. WYNN ELLIS said, he had presented a petition signed by 7,000 framework knitters, praying for the adoption of the measure of Government. He quite agreed in the statements that had been made as to the effect of those measures on the trade. In 1829 he had canvassed all parts of the town of Leicester, and nothing could exceed the misery and poverty which then everywhere prevailed. The tales told him were perfectly horrible: all this existed under a state of protection, the great panacea of the day.

SIR J. HOBHOUSE said, he had presented a petition from the mayor and town-council of Nottingham, which had been agreed to unanimously—also a petition signed by 12,000 of the inhabitants of Nottingham—in favour of the measure; and such was their confidence in those measures, that though they considered Government had not carried the principle to the full extent, namely, immediate re-

peal, yet, for the sake of the benefit which the measure would confer on the country generally, they begged that their own protection might be taken away. Though he (Sir J. Hobhouse) had received no communication on the subject, he was far from denying that distress prevailed at Nottingham. Since his connexion with that town, he had not known a single year, or portion of a year, in which such complaints had not been made; but this had been during the continuance of the protective system. There was something vicious in the system under which these attempts of the framework knitters had been carried on; they had been seeking to force a species of manufacture which could not be carried on advantageously under that system; and when the measures of Government were carried, they would at least have no more to complain of than any person engaged in other manufactures.

Mr. W. MILES asked, if when the amount of protection was 20 per cent., Saxon hosiery came into this country, how much more would come in when that protective duty would be reduced to 10 per cent.? Would not, he would ask, a very large quantity be imported? Would not, then, the Saxon trade deprive this country even of the advantage of a home market? Would not the natural consequence be the total ruin of the operatives in Nottingham on its reduction to 10 per cent.? Total free trade, or the proposed reduction in the present protective duty for hosiery, must almost, if not altogether, drive the home manufacture out of the market. He hoped, therefore, an effort would be made on that occasion to allow those operatives to remain as they were; for if now they were not able to compete with the foreigner with a duty of 20 per cent., would it not be totally impossible for them to compete with him when it would be reduced one half?

Mr. T. DUNCOMBE thought there should be a great distinction made between the state of the trade and the state of the operative. Nothing could be more frightful than the condition of the operative. How came it to be so bad? Because he did not receive his full share of the profits. Did people suppose, were the duty raised to 40 per cent., it would at all be to the advantage of the operative; that while the master manufacturer received 18s. a dozen, the operative only received his 8s. Was that a fair share for him to receive? Last

year there was a law passed called the "Ticket Act," the carrying out of which, he thought, would be of great advantage; and believing it would be useful in its operation, he would call on the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government to enforce that law, which, if properly administered, would confer great benefit.

VISCOUNT INGESTRE wished to know, if at the meeting alluded to by the hon. Member opposite (Mr. Strutt), there had been a single operative present to assert the claims of his class; if not, and the meeting consisted only of capitalists, he could view the proceedings only as an attempt to reduce yet further the miserable pittance the men still had.

Mr. FREWEN, in allusion to the remark of the hon. Member for Finsbury, declared his belief there was not a magistrate in the county of Leicester who would not do his utmost to carry into effect the law of last Session.

LORD G. BENTINCK said, that that hon. Gentleman would have them believe that all the distress had originated in the protection which was given to the stockingers; but he would like to know, if protection were that bane to the stockingers, how came it that the Saxon, under protection the most stringent, was able to enter into competition with the stockingers of England, so as to be able almost to drive them out of the market? He apprehended there was no country in which manufactures were more stringently protected than in Saxony, and yet the result was, that Saxony was able to rival England, not only at home but in all the markets of the world. He recollected the account which was given by Mr. McGregor, of the manufactures of Saxony. He stated that there stockings were made for 3d. a pair; while the Member for Nottingham told the House that there the charge was 8s. a dozen. He wanted to know how the stockinger of Nottingham and of Leicestershire could, under a productive duty of 10 per cent., and charging 8s. a dozen for stockings, compete with the Saxon who could sell his stockings at 3d. a pair, or 3s. a dozen? The hon. Member for Leicestershire had stated to the House that 100,000 persons were engaged in the stocking business. Was his noble Friend who asked protection for agriculture, prepared to try the experiment of free trade on the 100,000 stockingers?

The House divided on the Question—
Ayes 190; Noes 102: Majority 88.

List of the AYES.

Acland, T. D.
 A' Court, Capt.
 Adderly, C. B.
 Aglionby, H. A.
 Ainsworth, P.
 Aldam, W.
 Archbold, R.
 Baillie, Col.
 Baine, W.
 Baldwin, B.
 Barkly, H.
 Bariog, rt. hon. W. B.
 Barnard, E. G.
 Berkeley, hon. Capt.
 Blake, M. J.
 Bodkin, W. H.
 Botfield, B.
 Bouverie, hon. E. P.
 Bowes, J.
 Bowles, Adm.
 Bowring, Dr.
 Bright, J.
 Brotherton, J.
 Browne, hon. W.
 Bruce, Lord E.
 Busfield, W.
 Cardwell, E.
 Cavendish, hon. G. H.
 Chapman, B.
 Chichester, Lord J. L.
 Christie, W. D.
 Clay, Sir W.
 Clerk, rt. hon. Sir G.
 Cobden, R.
 Cochran, A.
 Cockburn, rt. hn. Sir G.
 Colebrooke, Sir T. E.
 Corry, rt. hon. H.
 Craig, W. G.
 Crawford, W. S.
 Cripps, W.
 Currie, R.
 Curteis, H. B.
 Dawson, hon. T. V.
 Dennistoun, J.
 D'Eyncourt, rt. hn. C. T.
 Dickinson, F. H.
 Douglas, Sir C. E.
 Drummond, H. H.
 Duke, Sir J.
 Duncan, Viset.
 Duncan, G.
 Duncannon, Viset.
 Duncombe, T.
 Dundas, Adm.
 Eastnor, Viset.
 Ebrington, Viset.
 Ellice, rt. hon. E.
 Ellice, E.
 Ellis, W.
 Elphinstone, H.
 Escott, B.
 Etwall, R.
 Evans, W.
 Ferguson, Col.
 Fitzroy, hon. H.
 Flower, Sir J.
 Forster, M.
 Gibson, T. M.
 Gill, T.
 Gisborne, T.
 Gladstone, Capt.
 Gore, M.
 Gore, hon. R.
 Goulburn, rt. hon. H.
 Graham, rt. hon. Sir J.
 Greene, T.
 Grey, rt. hon. Sir G.
 Hall, Sir B.
 Hamilton, W. J.
 Hamilton, Lord C.
 Hastie, A.
 Hatton, Capt. V.
 Hawes, B.
 Hayter, W. G.
 Herbert, rt. hon. S.
 Hill, Lord M.
 Hindley, C.
 Hobhouse, rt. hn. Sir J.
 Holland, R.
 Hornby, J.
 Horsman, E.
 Howard, hon. C. W. G.
 Howard, P. H.
 Hughes, W. B.
 Hume, J.
 Hutt, W.
 James, Sir W. C.
 Jermyn, Earl
 Jervis, J.
 Jocelyn, Viset.
 Kelly, Sir F.
 Labouchere, rt. hon. H.
 Laseelle, hon. W. S.
 Loch, J.
 Lockhart, A. E.
 Lyall, G.
 Macnamara, Major
 McCarthy, A.
 McGeeahy, F. A.
 McTaggart, Sir J.
 Mahon, Viset.
 Mangles, R. D.
 Marshall, W.
 Martin, J.
 Martin, C. W.
 Masterman, J.
 Matheson, J.
 Meynell, Capt.
 Mitealfe, H.
 Mitchell, T. A.
 Moffatt, G.
 Molesworth, Sir W.
 Morris, D.
 Morrison, J.
 Mostyn, hon. E. M. L.
 Muntz, G. F.
 Napier, Sir C.
 Norreys, Sir D. J.
 O'Connell, D.
 O'Connell, J.
 O'Connell, M. J.
 Osborne, R.
 Paget, Col.
 Palmerston, Viset.
 Parker, J.
 Paton, J. W.
 Peehell, Capt.
 Peel, rt. hon. Sir R.
 Peel, J.
 Plumridge, Capt.
 Price, Sir R.

Rawdon, Col.
 Reid, Sir J. R.
 Reid, Col.
 Russell, Lord J.
 Russell, Lord E.
 Ryder, hon. G. D.
 Sandon, Viset.
 Scott, R.
 Scrope, G. P.
 Seymour, Sir H. B.
 Smith, B.
 Smith, J. A.
 Smythe, hon. G.
 Smollett, A.
 Somerville, Sir W. M.
 Stansfield, W. R. C.
 Stanton, W. H.
 Stewart, J.
 Stuart, Lord J.
 Stuart, H.
 Strickland, Sir G.
 Strutt, E.
 Thesiger, Sir F.
 Thornely, T.
 Tollemache, hon. F. J.
 Tomline, G.
 Towneley, J.
 Trelawny, J. S.
 Trench, Sir F. W.
 Tufnell, H.
 Villiers, hon. C.
 Vivian, J. H.
 Vivian, hon. Capt.
 Wakley, T.
 Walker, R.
 Warburton, H.
 Ward, H. G.
 Wawn, J. T.
 Wellesley, Lord C.
 White, S.
 Williams, W.
 Wilshire, W.
 Wood, C.
 Wood, Col. T.
 Worsley, Lord
 Wortley, hon. J. S.
 Wyse, T.
 Yorke, H. R.

TELLERS.

Young, R.
 Bariog, H.

List of the NOES.

Aeton, Col.
 Alford, Viset.
 Allix, J. P.
 Antrobus, E.
 Arkwright, G.
 Austen, Col.
 Bagge, W.
 Baillie, W.
 Bankes, G.
 Barrington, Viset.
 Bateson, T.
 Bennett, J.
 Bennett, P.
 Bentinck, Lord G.
 Bentinck, Lord H.
 Boreford, Major
 Borthwick, P.
 Bramston, T. W.
 Bradley, H.
 Broadwood, H.
 Broeklehurst, J.
 Brooke, Lord
 Bruce, C. L. C.
 Buck, L. W.
 Chandos, Marq. of
 Churchill, Lord A. S.
 Chute, W. L. W.
 Clayton, R. R.
 Clifton, J. T.
 Cole, hon. H. A.
 Compton, H. C.
 Courtenay, Lord
 Deedes, W.
 Disraeli, B.
 Dodd, G.
 Duckworth, Sir J. T. B.
 Duncombe, hon. O.
 Du Pré, C. G.
 Fellowes, E.
 Finch, G.
 Fitzmaurice, hon. W.
 Floyer, J.
 Forbes, W.
 Fox, S. L.
 Frewen, C. H.
 Fuller, A. E.
 Granby, Marq. of
 Grogan, E.
 Hall, Col.
 Halsey, T. P.
 Harris, hon. Capt.
 Heathcote, G. J.
 Henley, J. W.
 Hildyard, T. B. T.
 Hinde, J. H.
 Hodgson, R.
 Hope, A.
 Houldsworth, T.
 Hudson, G.
 Hurst, R. H.
 Hussey, T.
 Ingestre, Viset.
 Irton, S.
 Jolliffe, Sir W. G. H.
 Jones, Capt.
 Knight, F. W.
 Knightley, Sir C.
 Law, hon. C. E.
 Lennox, Lord G. H. G.
 Liddell, hon. H. T.
 Lowther, hon. Col.
 Maelcan, D.
 Manners, Lord J.
 March, Earl of
 Maxwell, hon. J. P.
 Miles, P. W. S.
 Miles, W.
 Milnes, R. M.
 Mundy, E. M.
 Neeld, J.
 Neeld, J.
 Newdegate, C. N.
 Newport, Viset.
 O'Brien, A. S.
 Palmer, R.
 Pigot, Sir R.
 Rashleigh, W.
 Rendlesham, Lord

Repton, G. W. G.
 Rolleston, Col.
 Seymour, H. K.
 Shaw, rt. hon. F.
 Sibthorp, Col.
 Sotherton, T. H. S.
 Spooner, R.
 Thompson, Ald.
 Tollemache, J.

Vyse, R. H. R. H.
 Waddington, H. S.
 Walpole, S. H.
 Williams, T. P.
 Yorke, hon. E. T.

TELLERS.
 Halford, Sir H.
 Packe, C. W.

Further consideration of the Tariff adjourned till Monday.
 House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Monday, March 16, 1846.

CUSTOMS AND CORN IMPORTATION REPORT.

The further proceedings on the Report of the Customs and Corn Importation Resolutions was resumed.

On the Question, that Hops, the cwt., 2*l.* 5*s.*, stand part of the Resolution,

MR. PLUMPTRE said, this was a subject of deep and paramount importance to the county he had the honour to represent, and with which, of course, he was principally conversant, though he had every reason to believe that the matter was of equal, if not of greater magnitude, as respected Sussex and other hop growing counties. In 1842 the duty on the import of hops had been reduced from 8*l.* 10*s.*, or 9*l.*, to 4*l.* 10*s.*; but the latter sum was certainly acceded to by the hop growers, as not an inadequate amount of protection. It was now proposed, however, to reduce the duty from 4*l.* 10*s.* to 2*l.* 5*s.*; and the hop growers were universally of opinion, that under such a duty they would be utterly unable to maintain a competition with the foreign producer. It should be recollected the home hop grower had to pay an excise duty of 1*l.* per cwt., a burden which, of course, the foreign producer had not to bear, and which, therefore, operated, *pro tanto*, in favour of the foreigner, and against the home producer. The real amount of protective duty on the English hops was therefore reduced to 25*s.* per cwt.; a duty entirely inadequate to protect the hop planter of this country. Those who were acquainted with the growth of hops knew that it required some time to bring the article to perfection; and that bringing a plantation into a state fit for production was attended with heavy preliminary expenses. Moreover, large sums were in-

vested in the building of vast houses in which to dry the hops, so that a great amount of capital was invested in the raising of hops. There were from 20,000 to 30,000 acres occupied in the raising of hops in Kent alone. And it was a most important consideration in connexion with this subject, and showed how inseparable from the question of protection were the interests of labour—that in the growth of hops, at least 8*l.* more per acre were expended than in the cultivation of any other species of arable land; that is, that where 10*l.* per acre was expended in the wages of labour in the growth of hops, only 2*l.* per acre would be expended in the same way in the cultivation of wheat or any other grain. The labour likewise engaged in the raising of hops was not that of men alone, but of women and children. So that, in fact, in the hop districts, large populations had grown up around and arisen from the hop plantations in which they were engaged. The reduction of the duty would, by exposing the hop planters of this country to a ruinous competition, inflict irreparable injury on their interests. It was but justice, therefore, that, under such circumstances, if the customs duty were to be thus ruinously reduced in favour of the foreigner, at least the excise duty should be proportionally reduced in favour of the home grower, who then might have some chance of success in an otherwise hopeless competition. It was of great importance to bear in mind, in this question, that the consumer would not be benefited one jot by the reduction of duty. So small was the quantity of hops employed in brewing of beer, that when the effect of the duty was taken in detail, the reduction of the duty could not have the effect of lowering the price in any perceptible degree—certainly not more than one farthing per gallon; while, on the other hand, there was the certainty of irreparable injury—the prospect of utter ruin to an interest which proved the source of abundant employment to the poor, and in which large sums were invested. He pressed these considerations humbly, but earnestly, on the attention of the Government.

SIR R. PEEL did not know that he could add anything to that which he stated when this subject was brought under consideration by the hon. Member for Sussex, in the year 1842. It was stated that the duty being 9*l.* per cwt. in 1842, it was reduced to 4*l.* 14*s.* 6*d.* per cwt. Alarms of the same nature as those expressed by the

hon. Member for Kent were then expressed, that hops would then cease to be cultivated, and that the people would cease to be employed. But it appeared that, during the three years which had elapsed since 1842, only two cwt. of foreign hops had been brought in, while the duty which had been paid had not exceeded 10*l.* in the three kingdoms. He apprehended that the countries from which any formidable competition could be expected were very distant from this. Some hops, he believed, were grown in the United States; but they could not stand a long voyage, and were very much inferior to those grown in Kent. The produce of Kent, with the duty of 1*l.* per cwt., could enter into competition with the produce of America, or any foreign country. The introduction of hops into this country from any other had been hitherto a bad speculation, though sometimes the price was exorbitant. But if in dear years a moderate quantity were brought in, controlling the exorbitant prices, he (Sir R. Peel) thought it would be for the general advantage of the consumer, and he very much doubted if it would not be advantageous to the hop growers themselves. He could not consent to repeal the excise duties on hops, and lose 170,000*l.* revenue, or 200,000*l.* in prosperous years. The question was, whether the hop grower in this country, with a protection of 25*s.*; that is, deducting the 1*l.* excise duty from the 2*l.* 5*s.* protection duty, could not enter into competition with the foreign grower, except when the prices were so exorbitant as to render it for the interest of the consumer that they should have a foreign supply. He could not add anything to that which had been said upon what had been brought before them by the hon. Member for Sussex. He could not then consent to a reduction of the excise duties; and he could not think it desirable to maintain so high a duty as had been paid on foreign hops for the last three years, during which time only two cwt. had been imported, and 10*l.* duty had been paid.

Mr. FULLER said, to repeal the Corn Laws was bad enough, but to reduce the duty on hops was worse. It would ruin all the landowners, tenants, and labourers of Sussex and Kent, and it would throw thousands out of employ. It was impossible to estimate the distress that must arise. At least the excise duty ought to be reduced. Foreign hops would be sold here for less than they could be raised at in Sussex. English capital would soon be

directed to the increased production of foreign hops. The repeal of the malt duty which pressed so heavily on the agriculturists and the country, would be a great benefit to the entire community; and the right hon. Baronet (Sir J. Graham) might recollect his own declaration, that the repeal of the malt tax must follow the repeal of the Corn Laws. The right hon. Baronet had represented that the hop planters had made a great opposition to the last reduction of duty: it was true, and they had only agreed to the 4*l.* 10*s.* duty, on being assured that it should remain as a permanent and efficient protection.

COLONEL AUSTIN concurred in what had been expressed by the hon. Members for Sussex and Kent. The growth of hops stood in peculiar need of protection; and that it was totally unnecessary to reduce that protection on account of the consumer, was evident from this, that the prices had been moderate on an average. The fallacy of the right hon. Baronet was in assuming, that because 4*l.* 10*s.* might be adequate protection, 2*l.* 5*s.* could be so. But, in truth, it was only a protection to the extent of 1*l.* 5*s.*, when 1*l.* per cwt. was deducted for the excise duty, to which our hop growers were exclusively subjected. If the Government persisted in their resolution to reduce the duty, the most ruinous results must ensue in the hop growing countries. He feared that no reasoning and no appeals would induce the right hon. Baronet to modify his proposition; but the right hon. Gentleman would teach the farmers of England a bitter lesson they would not readily forget—that they were to expect permanence in no measures but such as operated to their detriment and disadvantage. Such were the fruits of that free-trade mania with which the right hon. Baronet had been unhappily inoculated from the opposite side of the House. Had he any influence with the House, he would not hesitate to use it to induce them to increase the protective duty on hops, rather than diminish it. But, as he knew that the hop-growing was carried on in few counties, and that Members for other districts were not acquainted with the importance of the subject, he despaired of making any impression on the House, and could only express an earnest hope that, on some future occasion, they would be induced to reconsider a matter so momentous.

Mr. KNIGHT wished it to be understood, that when the hop growers remon-

strated with the Government on the last reduction of the duty, they did so under the impression that it was to be a reduction to 22*s.* instead of 4*l.* 10*s.*, with which latter sum they were satisfied, and expected that it would be maintained. It ought not to be forgotten that extra tithes and poor rates were charged on hop grounds to the extent of some 4*s.* or 5*s.* per cwt.; which was of course a proportionate drawback on the protective duty. Then again another circumstance operated very unfavourably to the English hop grower: he had to pay the duty when his hops were dry; whereas the foreign producer could keep his hops in bond till they were required for consumption; meanwhile the English hop grower lost the interest of his money. Since 1842 foreign hops (Belgian for instance) had been offered freely in the river at 2*l.* 2*s.* per cwt., free of duty; the hop dealers in London offered 6*l.* 6*s.* per cwt. including duty; and with a 4*l.* 10*s.* duty, the foreign hops were excluded; but with a 1*l.* 5*s.* duty, of course at that price they would come into competition with our own hops. He had been informed on good authority that hops could be brought from America at 2*l.* per cwt., and the freight would be only 2*s.* or 3*s.* more; so that they would be nearly on the same footing as the Belgian hops. The Report of the Commissioners of Excise Inquiry, (Sir H. Parnell, Mr. Baring, and Mr. Wickham,) all staunch free traders, recommended that, concurrently with the reduction of the import duty, there should be a repeal of the excise duty. The average price of British hops had been 5*l.* 9*s.* per cwt.—not at all a high price—whereas foreign hops could be sold for 4*l.* 7*s.* per cwt., inclusive of the 2*l.* 5*s.* duty now proposed. He understood that the proposed alteration in the law of settlement in the hop districts was to be retrospective instead of prospective. This would be felt as a very hard case in the hop growing districts. Supposing the hop grounds were broken up, what would become of the poor people who had been located in those parishes? It was, in fact, like breaking up a manufacturing town, and leaving all the workmen to be maintained by the owners of the destroyed factories: the population was as much crowded together. He sincerely hoped that the right hon. Baronet would not throw prices so low as to prevent the English grower of hops continuing his cultivation. The right hon. Baronet had said, the precarious crop introduced a kind of

gambling into agricultural pursuits. The hop grower must have a certain capital to go on with in case of a bad year; and when they had districts in England where there were men of capital, and who were capable of carrying on the cultivation, he really did not see why they should be interfered with in their speculations. The question, then, was, should Government ruin those men, or should it not? There was another thing. In these hop districts a great quantity of coarse linen was consumed yearly in making hop bags, while the coals for drying amounted to at least 10,000 tons annually. He hoped the House would take this into consideration, and would either consent to let the foreigner pay a higher duty, equivalent to the excise duty on hops, or would take off the duty on hops altogether. The hon. Gentleman the Member for Kent had clearly showed that a reduction would have no real effect in lowering the price to the consumer, and therefore it would be needless to touch upon that. He thought if the right hon. Baronet wished to give cheap beer to the people, he should take the duty off malt.

MR. ALDERMAN HUMPHERY thought the proposed reduction would be advantageous to the public, and he doubted the accuracy of the calculations which had been made by the hon. Member who had just sat down with respect to the average price of hops in England. He recollected one year, the year 1817, in which the price was as high as 38*l.* per cwt. He did not think it at all likely that the cost of carrying American hops to this country would not exceed four or five shillings per bag; nay, he held it to be quite impossible, for it cost as much to convey them from Canterbury and Maidstone to London. Even though many of the hop gardens were to be thrown out of cultivation, the consequences would not be very disastrous, for there was no description of ground which grew better wheat than that which had previously been cultivated under hops.

MR. A. J. B. HOPE said, he thought the present question had not been put strongly enough in favour of the hop-growers. Hop growers were not merely agriculturists, but they were at once agriculturists and traders, and therefore might suffer the casualties which attend both the traders and the agriculturists. A bad crop of wheat or oats was a rarity; but the hop grower could not insure himself from

casualties even from one year to another. Formerly, they looked to a surplus of one year to supply the deficiency of another. They knew that high prohibitory duties would prevent foreign hops from coming in. The course of nature generally brought it round that good and bad harvests were just sufficient to make up in good years the deficiency of bad years. Any hop grower having capital could sell his hops, because he was enabled to store it up to meet the demands of scarce years; but if the facility which Government gave at present were removed, that could not be the case in future. He thought there were peculiar circumstances to prove that hops ought to be treated with particular leniency, especially when they remembered that hop growers paid the enormous excise duty of 2*d.* in the pound. They were also put to the annoyance of having an excise officer to stamp every bag of hops, and compelled to pay toll before it could be taken out of the store. When all this was considered, besides the uncertainties of time and season, he did think it was a very great hardship for the hop growers of Kent to have their protection taken from them while an expensive and burdensome excise duty was still levied upon their produce. He thought that if there was to be free trade, there should be free trade between Maidstone and London. He understood there was at the present moment a large London brewer who had ordered a quantity of hops from America, which at once went to prove that they could be brought into England. The hop trade in Kent supported and provided food and sustenance for numbers of the labouring classes of that county. It had been said that a great spirit of gambling was abroad; but if the excise duty were taken away, there would be none. The trade would then be carried on without any of that spirit of gambling which was now complained of. He thought that, considering hops were subject to a heavy excise duty, it demanded, if anything, a much greater protection.

Mr. FREWEN said, that the right hon. Baronet had alluded to the great profit which had been made by the hop-growers. It was very true that some large capitalists had made much money, but it was not the case generally speaking; for so great was the spirit of competition in this country, that the profit was lowered very considerably. The small hop grower invariably lost money after a

series of years, while the large grower made great profits. The year 1817 had been alluded to in the course of the evening; but there was a very great blight during that year, and therefore it ought not to be quoted as a precedent, as it was a very extraordinary year. Hops could not be grown, he was informed, under 40*l.* an acre, of which 12*l.* went to pay the wages of men, women, and children. He could assure the House that a large number of hop grounds would be thrown out of cultivation in consequence of this measure. The hop grower, however, would not object to the protective duty being lessened, if the Government would at the same time take off a portion of the excise duty.

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said, that he was very glad he gave way to the hon. Gentleman who had just addressed the House, as he had told them that although the system of protection amounted to a prohibition, yet the effect of it upon the hop grower was such as to make hop grounds for the most part losing concerns. He thought no argument could be stronger than that, for attempting some change in the system which had proved so detrimental to small people engaged in the growth of that particular article. When the hon. Gentleman talked of a perfectly free trade in hops, he should consider what the proposition was before the House. The Government did not put the English hop grower on the same footing as the foreigner, but it put double the duty upon the foreigner to what it did on the home grower. The hon. Member for Maidstone had said, that were they not deprived of their present advantages, they could hold their hops over against a deficiency; but was such a mode of gaining a profit what the Government ought to support, as fair to the consumer? The hon. Gentleman had also expressed great fear that we should have American hops introduced into this country; but on that head, he had been sufficiently answered by one of his own party. He wished the hon. Gentleman would mention the name of the large brewer who had sent to America for hops; because if his name were once known, he would undoubtedly lose all his custom. Much had been said against the excise duty. It had been said, that the foreign hops would not require to have the duty paid till they were taken out of bond, while the duty on home-grown hops must be paid when they were dried. Such was

not the fact; the excise duty was not paid until a considerable time afterwards. He believed the excise duty was considered by many hop growers to be a protection to them.

LORD G. BENTINCK said, that there were other gambling speculations going on in this country than gambling in hops. There was a little gambling going on in railway speculations just now; but he was not exactly of opinion that any trade ought to be put down because gamblers chose to speculate upon the honest pursuits of other persons. He apprehended that the hop growers themselves were not the gamblers—it was the London speculators who were the gamblers. It had been stated by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that the House heard from the hon. Member for Sussex that hop-growing had been a losing concern for some years past; but the right hon. Gentleman proposed a different remedy to that which he should propose. He should propose that the excise duty be taken off. He was glad to hear, in the early part of the evening, the strongest proof of the advantage of the abolishment of the excise duties. The abolition of the excise duties upon glass had brought a considerable reduction of outlay to the Government, by the employment of a less number of excise officers; and he thought they had a reasonable ground for supposing that one hundred excise officers might come off, and upwards of 10,000*l.* a year be saved, by abolishing the present hop duty. That would be a means of giving assistance to the hop growers. A gentleman had called upon him that morning and assured him that in the year 1836, under the regulations of the Excise, he had paid 18*s.* 8*d.* a cwt. upon fifteen tons and a half of hops, which were grown in 1836, which was a good year; the result was, he was obliged to hold his hops till 1840, when he was tired of holding them, and then he sold the hops, with that duty of 18*s.* 8*d.* paid upon them for 16*s.* It had been stated that in 1817 or 1818, hops were 38*l.* the cwt. Would they admit foreign-grown hops to remedy such disastrous effects as this? He wished to call the attention of the hon. Gentlemen on the Treasury bench to one thing. Suppose they were to throw the hop grounds out of cultivation, what did the Government mean to do with the Tithe Commutation Act? He understood that while wheat land paid 7*s.* an acre towards the tithes, hop land paid 29*s.* He admitted that a duty of 4*l.* 10*s.* a cwt. was a

higher duty than was required; but at the same time, he thought that duty reduced as it was now proposed to be reduced, was too small; but the forms of the House prevented him from proposing any intermediate duty; and, therefore, whilst he protested against his vote to-night being considered as a vote in favour of a duty which was almost prohibitory, yet he had no other option than to propose that that part of the Resolution be omitted.

The House divided on the Question, that Hops the cwt. 2*l.* 5*s.* stand part of the Resolution:—Ayes 91; Noes 44: Majority 47.

List of the AYES.

Aglionby, H. A.	Hughes, W. B.
Aldam, W.	Hume, J.
Baine, W.	Humphrey, Ald.
Baring, rt. hon. F. T.	Jermyn, Earl
Barnard, E. G.	Jocelyn, Viset.
Bernal, R.	Kelly, Sir F.
Blewitt, R. J.	Kirk, P.
Botfield, B.	Langston, J. H.
Bouverie, hon. E. P.	Loekhart, A. E.
Bowles, Adm.	McCarthy, A.
Brotherton, J.	Mangles, R. D.
Browne, hon. W.	Masterman, J.
Bruce, Lord E.	Mitchell, T. A.
Bussfield, W.	Moffatt, G.
Butler, hon. Col.	Molesworth, Sir W.
Carcwell, E.	Mostyn, hon. E. M. L.
Carnegie, hon. Capt.	Muntz, G. F.
Chichester, Lord J. L.	Neville, R.
Childers, J. W.	Osborne, R.
Clerk, rt. hon. Sir G.	Parker, J.
Cobden, R.	Pechell, Capt.
Collett, J.	Peel, rt. hon. Sir R.
Collins, W.	Peel, J.
Corry, rt. hon. H.	Phillips, J. R.
Cowper, hon. W. F.	Phillpots, J.
Crawford, W. S.	Plumridge, Capt.
Cripps, W.	Seymour, Lord
Dalrymple, Capt.	Somers, J. P.
Diekinson, F. H.	Staunton, Sir G. T.
Douglas, Sir C. E.	Stewart, J.
Dundas, Adm.	Strutt, E.
Ebrington, Viset.	Thesiger, Sir F.
Ellie, rt. hon. E.	Thornley, T.
Ellis, W.	Trelawny, J. S.
Eseott, B.	Trench, Sir F. W.
Etwall, R.	Tuffnell, H.
Fitzgerald, R. A.	Vivian, J. H.
Fitzroy, hon. H.	Wakley, T.
Flower, Sir J.	Warburton, H.
Goulburn, rt. hon. H.	Wawn, J. T.
Graham, rt. hon. Sir J.	White, S.
Greene, T.	Williams, W.
Hammer, Sir J.	Wood, Col. T.
Hatton, Capt.	Yorke, H. H.
Henthecoat, J.	
Hindley, C.	TELLERS.
Howard, P. H.	Young, J.
	Baring, H.

List of the NOES.

Allix, J. P.	Baillie, W.
Arbuthnot, hon. H.	Banks, J.
Austen, Col.	Benett, J.

Bennett, P.
Bentinck, Lord J.
Bentinck, Lord H.
Beresford, Major
Borthwick, P.
Brocklehurst, J.
Buck, L. W.
Deedes, W.
Disraeli, B.
Dodd, G.
Finch, G.
Frewen, C. H.
Fuller, A. E.
Gaskell, J. Milnes
Granby, Marq. of
Halford, Sir H.
Hall, Col.
Hodgson, R.
Hope, A.
Houldsworth, T.
Liddell, hon. H. T.

Lygon, hon. Gen.
Manners, Lord J.
March, Earl of
Miles, W.
Newdegate, C. N.
O'Brien, A. S.
Packer, C. W.
Palmer, G.
Repton, G. W. J.
Richards, R.
Rolleston, Col.
Sheppard, T.
Sibthorp, Col.
Spoonor, R.
Stanley, E.
Thompson, Ald.
Worcester, Marq. of

TELLERS.

Plumtre, J.
Knight, F. W.

On the article Leather,

MR. KNIGHT said, that with respect to boots and shoes, he understood that great distress had ensued among the boot and shoemakers, consequent upon the last reduction in the Tariff affecting these articles. He knew that many houses in London, which had paid 500*l.* a week wages, had shifted their establishments to Boulogne. One of these houses had exported a great number of shoes and boots. He was of opinion that the reductions would not only injure the trades which they affected in the metropolis, but press with still greater severity on the inhabitants of the country towns and hamlets. He thought that the electors of Stafford had made a bad bargain for themselves by the recent election. He would not divide the House on the question.

On the Question that "Plaiting of Straw the lb., 5*s.*."

MR. REPTON regretted that the right hon. Baronet had made this article the subject of still further reduction. The right hon. Baronet said, he regretted that he had not in the Tariff of 1842 proposed a still lower rate of duty; but he did not think the right hon. Gentleman had any reason for regret, except that he had reduced the duty at all. Before 1842, the duty was 10*s.*; but it had by that measure been reduced to 7*s.* 6*d.* The House might not perhaps be aware that there were from 30,000 to 40,000 people employed in the manufacture of straw plait in the counties of Hertford, Essex, Buckingham, and Bedford. It appeared to him that one of the great advantages derived by those employed in that business was, that they were able to plait the straw in their own homes. Many children and girls were employed under the eyes of their own parents. In

Tuscany a particular sort of grass was cultivated for this purpose, which he was told did not grow in this country. He had himself seen it growing near Florence. From inquiries made he was led to believe there were three kinds of plait—one was of a very fine nature; the second fine, but less so than the first; and the third of a coarser sort. It was only concerning the two former kinds that apprehensions were entertained. Fine straw was of great use to the retailers in London; but that particularly fine quality was used entirely by the upper classes. He put it to the House, if it were not a hard case that the poor operatives should suffer, to make this kind of plait somewhat cheaper. The people of this country would find it impossible to compete with those of the north of Italy. The article, as he had already said, was exclusively used by the upper classes, and he was sorry to say that his countrywomen gave it the preference over the produce of their own country; but as it was, he thought that when these ladies would wear so fine an article, they ought to be made to pay for it. Much had been said about improving the condition of the lower classes; but he thought reduced wages, that would follow from this measure, was a bad step towards it. He thought it would operate injuriously upon the poor women and children employed in this trade. It must be known that plait was an article of which a great quantity could be wrapped in very small bundles; and that, consequently, the freightage was trifling. He would be glad to know the number of convictions for smuggling this straw plait, for great smuggling of this article had, in 1842, been urged as one of the reasons for lowering the duty.

MR. G. CLERK was sorry if any injury had been done to the straw-plait manufacturers by the measure of 1842. At that time the duty was 17*s.* 6*d.* [Mr. REPTON: Ten shillings.] No; 17*s.* 6*d.*, and that, too, he recollected, upon a guinea's worth of the article. It was, in 1842, reduced to a duty of 7*s.* 6*d.*; and they now proposed to reduce it to 5*s.*; still leaving a protection of 20 per cent. upon an article which could be, and had been, smuggled with the greatest facility. Since the reduction of 1842, he was proud to say the straw-plait workers had introduced such improvements in the plaiting of the article, as to be enabled to produce a superior quality; so that there was no ground for the apprehension entertained by the Member.

Question agreed to.

On the Question, that all the articles included under the head Silk Manufactures stand part of the Question,

MR. BANKES said, he would propose the omission of items upon which it was proposed to reduce the duty to a very large extent. In doing so he would meet the challenge of the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, who challenged any one to show that any material interest had been injured by the lowering of duty for any length of time. The right hon. Baronet assumed, not only that no interest had been injured, but that all had been benefited, either immediately or within a very short period of the time when such an alteration was made. He should have felt some hesitation in taking up a subject on which he could not pretend to any practical knowledge or information, neither could he say it was one in which his constituents were especially interested; but he felt for the many weavers whose interests would be injured by the reduction of duties, and he had obtained a degree of information which reached to a certain period, was full and accurate, and of an authority that could not be disputed. Within six years of the alteration made in the silk trade by Mr. Huskisson, circumstances had occurred which, so far from showing any improvement, evinced that inconvenience and suffering had been the result—in fact so much so that Parliament, then under the control of a Whig Government, felt itself constrained to yield to the demands of those engaged in that trade, and appoint a Committee to inquire into the subject. In 1832 a Committee was appointed, of which he was a Member. There was upon it twenty-three Members of the House of Commons, of whom as far as he was aware, only seven were now in the House. The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government was a Member of that Committee; but, so far as his recollection extended, attended it very seldom. He (Mr. Bankes) had since thought that if the right hon. Baronet had attended it more frequently, he would not have thrown out the challenge he had given, because he must have felt that the mass of evidence there tendered was entirely opposite to his present views. The hon. Member for Montrose was also a Member of the Committee, and a constant attendant at the sittings; and that hon. Member would not dispute the authority of the evidence it received. The sittings of the Committee extended over a period of five

months, from March until August. It was appointed—

“To examine into the present state of the silk trade, and to inquire what effects had been produced by the changes in the laws relating to the silk trade, since 1824, and whether any legislative measure could be devised compatible with the general interest of the country, which would have the effect of promoting it; at the same time to prevent smuggling in silk manufacture, and to report thereon to the House.”

The Committee sat almost incessantly, and only closed its labours with the Session. The Report of the Committee was only laid on the Table the last day of the Session, and was in these words:—

“Your Committee regret that they are unable to make any general or full report on several matters committed to their consideration; but the various interests included, and the extent of the subject brought before the Committee, as well as the great number of witnesses they had to examine, and the knowledge that many others still remain to be examined, compel us at this late period of the Session, only to lay the evidence taken before the House.”

Had he (Mr. Bankes) been a Member of the ensuing Parliament, he would certainly have moved for the reappointment of the Committee; but he had not been in that House for several years after. When the Committee drew near to a close, the late Sir Fowell Buxton, who was one of its Members, prepared a Resolution, which he submitted to the Committee as a foundation for its Report. He had the honour of assisting him, and Alderman Walthman also took part in preparing it. A day was fixed upon which this Resolution was to be discussed. When the day came, one of the Members, then the Member for Coventry, as he believed (Sir H. Bulwer), did not attend, from illness or some other cause. The consequence was, that the Members of the Committee were divided equally for and against the Resolution. The chairman (Mr. Sanford) was known to be in favour of the views of the supporters of the Resolution, and his casting vote would have decided it in their favour. Before the division took place, however, a Member of the Committee was sent for, who had never been at any previous sitting (Sir Henry Parnell), and he voted against them. This was the reason why no other than the meagre Report which they saw on the Table had been produced, and which was sufficient to assure them that no complete inquiry had taken place; but a mass of facts had been recorded which indisputably proved that the complaints of the petitioners were well founded, and that the

silk trade had experienced severe depression from the measures introduced by Mr. Huskisson. There might be still a very large capital engaged in the manufacture of silk; but it had been proved, and he would forthwith direct their attention to the evidence, that the lowering of the duty had had the effect of lessening the wages of the operatives engaged in that trade more than half—that, from a state of comparative ease and comfort—he had almost said indulgence, in which they were before the change was made—they had been thrown into fearful and general distress during the six years that intervened between the passing of the measure and the appointment of the Committee. The hon. Member then proceeded to read extracts from the evidence given before the Committee in question. Mr. William Brunskill after one or two observations made by him, was questioned as follows:—

“How do you think the measure has affected the ribbon trade?—I think great distress has taken place in the ribbon trade from foreign competition.

“Do you consider that smuggling has increased in this period as compared with the period prior to 1826?—Amazingly.

“Are you aware of any manufacturers who thought well of the scheme when first proposed, and who have since altered their opinion?—Yes. I have reason to think there are several, and I will name them if the Committee wish (witness did name them).

“What difference is there between the wages of the English and the foreign workman?—I should think the English workman has, generally speaking, very nearly double.

“Are you not aware that a great number of weavers in Spitalfields are thrown out of employment by the same article being manufactured in Manchester?—I am not aware of that.

“Is it not a fact, that taking the whole of the goods now made in Spitalfields, that a quality is made much better than it was a few years ago?—I should say not; I think they made better goods ten years ago than they make now.

“You state that wages in Spitalfields have been reduced 50 per cent. since 1826?—Yes? from 40 to 50 per cent.

“Do you attribute that to the introduction of goods from France?—Yes; mainly I do.

There would be found in another part of the Report, an estimate of the average weekly earnings of weavers in full employment, in the plain ribbon trade, including satins and sarsenets. From the evidence of Mr. Benjamin Poole, it appeared that in 1815 the wages was 18s. 1½d. per week; in 1816, 17s.; in 1818, 14s. 6d.; in 1819, 18s. 1½d. again; in 1824, 17s.; in 1826, the year after the reduction, 14s.; in 1829, three years after the alteration, they fell to 10s. 10d., from 18s. 1½d.

He also found in that Report an account of the money actually paid for poor rates in Coventry—the parish of Coventry, for the support of permanent casual poor. At Lady-day, 1824, the amount paid for poor rate in that parish for permanent and casual poor, was 1,307l. 10s. 3d. In 1830, six years after, the poor rate rose to 2,192l. 19s. 2d.. Then, as regarded the evidence of Mr. Brocklehurst, he gave a statement respecting Macclesfield; he mentioned the number of spindles in employ, which were, in 1824, 276,000, and 10,000 people employed; in 1828, four years after, and two years after the alteration of duty, the number of working spindles in that town was reduced from 276,000 to 159,000—whilst the people, who in 1824 were 10,000, were reduced to 5,254. But in the year 1831, a reduction still more remarkable occurred; the number of spindles was reduced to 120,000, and the people employed to 3,000, having been 10,000 in 1824. Then as to wages. In 1824, the wages of the able man in this trade was 18s. a week, the wages of young men 14s., of young women 12s. a week, of children from 7s. 6d. to 3s. 6d. In 1828, four years after, the wages of able men, which had been 18s., were reduced to 8s. 6d.; the wages of young men, which had been 14s., were reduced to 7s. 3d.; the wages of women, which had been 12s., were reduced to 6s.; the wages of children, which had been from 7s. 6d. to 3s. 6d., were reduced to 3s. 6d. and 1s. 9d. But in 1831, still further reductions took place, for the wages of able men were reduced to 4s. 7d. which had been 18s., the wages of young men to 4s. of women to 3s., of children to 1s. Then let them take the poor rates of Macclesfield. In 1824, the gross expenditure of poor rates was 4,201l. 18s.; in 1829, five years after the poor rate was more than doubled—it amounted to 8,670l. Then let them take the number of families receiving relief. In 1825, there were fifty-six families in that town receiving relief; in 1831, 511. Now, could any one withstand such facts as these? Was he to be told now, even supposing the statement was true, which he could prove it was not, that it was true the silk weavers did suffer for five or six years, but that they had now recovered? That would not meet his case. He had answered the challenge which had been thrown out, to produce a single case where mischief had resulted from the reduction of protection; and he had shown that great and enormous

mischief had been the result of a rash alteration in those duties—an alteration of the effect of which the House was warned, but which being sanctioned by the great name of Mr. Huskisson, was carried as triumphantly as any of those alterations which the House was now achieving. He would not say but the great manufacturers might be ready to try this great experiment, and to share in the glory which was anticipated from the new system, and which was to find imitators in every part of the world. But they could afford to stand the risk of five or six years of depreciation, and sustain the disadvantage which unrestricted competition would cause them; but he begged the House to remember that that which was a mere temporary disadvantage to them, was ruin to the poorer classes. The House could not re-establish them—it could not indemnify them for the injury which was brought upon them. He thought, therefore, they ought to pause, and give the operatives time to recover from the injuries which had already been inflicted upon them. The manufacturers would no doubt speak for themselves—some of them were present in the House; but he should be surprised, indeed, if any of them would rise and tell him that the operatives were in favour of this change, or that they did not look forward with great and reasonable dread to the farther mischief which these measures were likely to bring upon them. But it might be said, it was true, the Spitalfields weavers were ruined; but what business had they to settle there? The hon. Member for Montrose said that. [Mr. HUME: No, no!] The hon. Member denied it, but he had heard the hon. Member say something very like that, namely, that the weavers had no business to settle there. Others said, "True, the business had disappeared from Spitalfields, but it had risen in other parts of the country." Then, where was it? He had not been able to discover it in other parts of the country. It was not the same sort of trade it was—not the trade which gave the high wages—it was not the trade which wrought the valuable kind of manufactures, which branch of trade alone gave the high wages; and when he was met, as he had no doubt he would be, with returns from the Board of Trade, showing a great increase in the weight and bulk of the silk exported, he begged to say that would not meet his argument in regard to wages—it rather confirmed his apprehensions, that they had lost the

manufacture of those fine and valuable fabrics which were bought by the rich, till, in consequence of the change they were enabled to buy them from foreigners; which were bought by the rich who could afford to pay high prices; and for the fabrication of which the master manufacturers were enabled to pay high wages. Those fabrics ought to have been encouraged, and not to have been surrendered in despair of being able to compete with the taste or with the dyes of France. At the very moment the change took place, they were in the act of surmounting these obstacles; they were discovering the means of being able to compete with foreigners both with respect to the dyes and to taste; so much so, that it was stated before the Committee that a fabric was seized at the Custom House as French, which was afterwards proved to be an English one. The quantity of silk now manufactured might be as much as before; but what he contended was, that those expensive fabrics which alone gave high wages, were now given up in a great measure. Therefore, when it was said that the persons formerly employed in Spitalfields had now gone to Manchester and Nottingham, he said it was not to work those fine and beautiful fabrics. They were engaged in the manufacture of silk it was true; but it was silk of an inferior nature—what was called the husks and knubs. [*Cheers.*] Hon. Members cheered him. Was it a matter of indifference to the operatives? Did they think what wages they got? That was his case. It was nothing to prove to him that the same number of people were employed who would have been employed under other circumstances. His case was, that great numbers of them were employed at wages so low as hardly to provide sufficient subsistence for themselves and their families. It required no intimacy with the feeling of the working classes to know that they were not agreeable to the proposed change. Reports of meetings had been published in the public journals: one of these was held at Manchester, and the report described it as numerous and enthusiastic. Mr. Cann was unanimously called to the chair; and he stated that the proposed Tariff would have the effect of lowering their present low rate of wages. Then the meeting was addressed by Mr. Bennet, who declared to the meeting—

"That he had been a weaver for fifty-seven

years, and he found by bitter experience that every advance towards free trade only lowered their wages; he would ask who they were who were now the leaders of free trade? Not the manufacturers, but great capitalists who could buy goods anywhere, and would buy them where they could get them the cheapest, never caring about the labourer. He would ask who were Cobden and Bright? Two men who had amassed large fortunes by getting work done cheap, and only wanted the repeal of the Corn Laws for their own benefit. But he was sure that neither the weavers, nor, in fact, any body of working men, when the matter was properly explained to them, would be led away by the cry of cheap bread. But then Mr. Cobden said bread would not fall much in this country, but would rise on the contrary abroad; but the manufacturers there would not raise their workmen's wages any more than our manufacturers, because their food was dearer; and thus we should make the poor there worse off than they were at present, and do no good to ourselves. For our manufacturers and capitalists took care, when bread was cheap to make that an excuse to lower wages; but they also took care, when food was dear, not to raise them. Huskisson's measures had brought ruin upon numbers of poor families, and Sir Robert's, he was sure, would prove worse still.

"Mr. Jones said he quite agreed with the previous speaker, and he thought the best thing they could do was to petition against the measure, because he was sure that they could not compete with the French unless we had taxation as low, and wages still lower.

"Mr. Field then moved the following Resolution:—'Resolved that we, the weavers of Manchester, in public meeting assembled, are of opinion that the reduction of duties upon foreign silks will be a very great injury to the silk trade of this country; and we, therefore resolve to oppose it by every legal and constitutional means.' He (Mr. Field) could also recollect the vast amount of misery which Huskisson's measure had inflicted on the silk trade of this country, and the misery and starvation which that measure had brought upon the weavers generally. It had had the effect of lowering their wages one-half, and Peel's measure would, if passed, do the same; and he was sure it would benefit no class of persons but the fundholder, the large capitalist, and the fixed annuitant. It was very well for such men as Mr. Home to advocate low wages, just because his lady would get a silk dress about sixpence cheaper, or perhaps a new bonnet threepence cheaper. The fact was, that the capitalist and large manufacturers were not content with taking their sweat, but they had taken their flesh, and now they wanted to open their bones and suck the marrow out. He concluded by proposing the Resolution, which was seconded by Mr. Canvener.

"Mr. Clough then moved, 'that a petition be presented to both Houses of Parliament, against the passing of Sir Robert Peel's measure, and instead of it to grant protection for labour to the working class.'"

There was another meeting held in a different place on the same day. It appeared that these meetings were perfectly open; and yet the Resolutions were carried without one dissentient voice. Now, if he found that even in Manchester itself such lan-

guage was openly held, could he doubt that the working classes generally were averse to the change? True, he found no persons of wealth or consideration taking part in these meetings; but that was no reason why the House should disregard them. They were meetings of the working classes, who were awake to the danger to which they were exposed by these rash experiments. They were persons who had felt the evils; and therefore they were alive to this fresh attack. It was true that other trades and occupations had not shown the same feeling, because, happily, they had not hitherto felt the same degree of injury. Now, he had been told that the Spitalfields weavers had gone to Manchester; well, he had traced them to Manchester, and this was the wretched condition in which he found them, that they were scarcely able at present to provide food for themselves and their families, and reasonably anticipating that if this fresh change were made, their condition would become worse than ever. But it was very singular that in a few parts of the kingdom did they hear much of this class of persons. His attention had been drawn incidentally to this subject, by looking over the Report of one of the Inspectors of Factories, whose attention was necessarily directed to the subject of mills and factories through the kingdom. In looking through the Report of Mr. Saunders for the year 1845, whose districts comprehended the counties of Derby, Hertford, Kent, Lancaster, Leicester, Nottingham, Somerset, Wilts, and York, he found this result, that from comparing the number of mills in October, 1838, with those in January, 1845, there were in the former period, of cotton, 204 mills, in the latter period, 263 mills; being an increase of 59. Of wool, in the former period, there were 566 mills, in the latter period, 655; being an increase of 89 mills; of worsted fabrics, in the former period, there were 388 mills, in the latter 438, increase 50; of flax mills, in the former period, 59 mills, in the latter 65; increase 6; and then came silk, which employed in the former period 69 mills, and in the latter 63; being the only trade in which there had been a decrease. He found also that the total number of children under his observation in Lancashire was 13,000, while the children employed in the silk trade was only 800. Therefore, looking to this extensive district of the country, he did not find that the silk trade,

which had been expelled from London by these experiments, had been largely established in any other part of the kingdom. He did not dispute that there were many manufactures which were called silk, but which were not formerly thought worthy of that name—manufactures where silk was mixed with cotton, worsted, and other articles; but he begged again that the House would bear in mind that it was the question of wages he was arguing. There was a paper which had been largely circulated, and from which, therefore, he would quote but little; but there were a few particulars which he begged to lay before the House as a fair summary of his case, and as containing matter well deserving their attention. It appeared, then, that the wages of the silk weaver were less by one-half now than they were in 1824; he thought the evidence he had quoted had already established that fact. He trusted he should hear in the course of the debate, that, in many parts of the kingdom, the higher rates of wages were resumed; for he did not deny that the manufacturers now could and did carry on the higher fabrics, but not to the same extensive degree as before; they had not increased in the same proportion as they would have done if protection had not been withdrawn; and therefore he had a right to assume that a large proportion of those who were now earning small wages would have been employed in a more profitable way, if these alterations had not been made. The second statement contained in the paper to which he had referred was, that the annual value of the silk manufactured in England was less by 2,000,000*l.* or 3,000,000*l.* sterling than it was in 1824. Here again they had to deal with quality, not with quantity, because the exports of silk to France, which were so much spoken of, consisted of coarse yarns for fringes, &c., while the imports from France consisted of the finest fabrics, so that the average value of English silk exported to France was 7*s.* 6*d.* per lb., while the average value of the French silk imported to England was 5*s.* per lb., which marked the difference in the quality of the silk and in the value of the labour. The declared value of the English exports of silk into France was somewhere above 156,000*l.*, while the declared value of the French imports into England was above 1,000,000*l.* sterling. He might state that a portion of his constituents were interested in the silk trade; and when he had on a former occasion opposed the reduction of

the duty on thrown silk, and urged the ease of his constituents upon the right hon. Baronet, he received for answer that his was one of the counties which had been beaten out of their manufactures by the discovery of new machinery; and, above all, by the discovery of steam. Now, he could assure the right hon. Baronet, that the manufacture of thrown silk could be quite as well carried on by water power as by steam. But the fact was, in consequence of the reduction in the duties, where there had been two large establishments employing a great number of hands, there was now only one establishment, the hands were considerably reduced, and the rates of wages, though there was every disposition on the part of the masters to pay liberally, were still in no degree so high as they had been before. Thus the population of that district had to a large extent been thrown out of work, particularly young females, were deprived of employment which was profitable to them, and in no degree injurious to the health; for it was a singular fact, that the health suffered less in the silk than in any other manufacture. For those reasons, in addition to others, he trusted that the case of those persons would meet with the sympathy of the House. He did not wish to mix it up with other questions. He should prove an interested and unworthy advocate, if he were to damage the cause of these unfortunate persons by mixing it up with any other question. Vote as they would upon other questions—state if they chose that the case of the agricultural labourer rested on a different footing; but let them not, in their wish to carry the Corn Laws, do injustice to this particular class of persons who had already suffered so severely from the Tariff, and who, if they were now in a prosperous state, were but recovering from the depression to which former experiments had reduced them. If it could be shown that they were now in a flourishing state, he said, leave them so; and for years to come let them enjoy that protection to which they were so much entitled. Those richer fabrics which afforded the high prices, could only be purchased by the wealthy. They were the only persons who could complain of the high prices; and he trusted that class would let it be a part of their privileges—a part of their pride—if they were to adorn their palaces with hangings of these fabrics, that in these expensive articles of dress and furniture they were contributing to the high wages of the

operative classes. He would certainly divide on this subject, because, as had been said, it involved other interests; for the questions of dress and millinery related to the same subject—they all related to the pride and the pleasure of the rich. They might, by the abolition of the Corn Laws, lower the amount of wealth of the nobles of the land; but depend upon it, it would still be their pride and their happiness to contribute to the just remuneration of the working classes. He concluded by moving the omission of all articles in the Tariff which included silk.

MR. WYNN ELLIS said he had been a Member of the Committee of 1833, to which the hon. Gentleman (Mr. Banks) had referred, and that he had taken the part of the operatives in the silk trade during that investigation. He gave the hon. Member credit for sincerity; but he begged to remind him that the question was not whether we could return to the old system of prohibition. That was quite impossible. It was assumed that if we did, the former rate of wages might still be obtained; but he apprehended no such result would follow, the competition for employment being too great. The hon. Gentleman said he did not know what had become of the silk trade that had left Spitalfields; and he asked where it was gone? He was sorry to say that since 1832 the number of parties engaged in the silk trade in Spitalfields had been reduced from 14,000 to 9,000. It was also assumed, and it was quite true, that if you admitted the silks of France, the whole of the very superior fabrics would come from that country. That was the case undoubtedly; and it would be so for some time yet, because in France there was a richer description of silk grown than reached this country, all of which they consumed. He had been in the silk trade thirty-five years, and he could assure the House that the best description of silks now imported from France had never, at any time, been manufactured in Spitalfields, although there had been a great improvement in the manufacture of this country, and although in operative skill the workmen of Spitalfields were equal to the execution of anything that could be produced in France. He would, however, revert to one point he had omitted, and give the House an idea of what had become of the silk trade. Ribbons formerly made in Coventry were now manufactured in Derby; large houses had been established at Manchester, Battersea,

and Congleton. At Coventry they now made a description of goods hardly known there twenty years ago—gauze ribbons. Broad silks were manufactured at Leigh, Middleton, Manchester, and other places. With regard to the prices at which these goods could be imported from France, he had a return in his hands from Lyons, from which he was satisfied that, weight for weight, excluding gauzes, our goods were quite as cheap as those manufactured in France. There was little to fear from competition. Let our inferiority be no longer proclaimed, but let us, by sound legislation, induce men of enterprise, capital, and energy, to embark in the trade, and it would soon be found that Spitalfields would not only rival, but be superior to, the manufactures of France. Broad silks—bandanas for instance—were made in large quantities by the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Brocklehurst), exceeding in quality and cheapness those of France, so much so that they were printed and exported to a very great extent to France, and other parts of the Continent.

MR. BROCKLEHURST begged to interrupt the hon. Member. The article of bandanas were manufactured in India, printed in this country, and then sent to France. They were not the manufacture of Macclesfield.

MR. W. ELLIS assured the hon. Member that Indian bandanas were not only printed in this country, but also that his (Mr. Brocklehurst's) own cloths were printed, and then sent into France, through Belgium. He admitted that there had been a diminution in the wages of the operatives within the last few years; but that, he contended, would have occurred had the system of protection been continued. If these duties were removed, he felt convinced that men of capital would embark their money in the silk trade, which would thus be placed on a systematic footing, the same as regulated the cotton trade. He believed that in a few years these duties would be removed altogether, and he knew that one of the most intelligent manufacturers of Spitalfields had provided for the anticipated change by sending his sons to the manufacturing towns of France.

MR. BROCKLEHURST said, the hon. Member who had just sat down spoke of the sons of a manufacturer being sent abroad for the purpose of being taught the modes of conducting the silk trade in France; and to his (Mr. Brocklehurst's) apprehension, by this fact the weakness

of the argument of the hon. Member was proved. What would become of the weavers of Spitalfields until these persons returned with new notions of trade? The hon. Gentleman spoke largely of broad silks, but took a very narrow view of the subject. The hon. Gentleman also spoke of Spitalfields being under the direction of "brokers;" but he should have said "wholesale dealers," who, in fact, addressed language of this description to the manufacturers—"These are our prices; if you like them, take them; but if you do not choose to accept, we shall send our travellers to France, and supply ourselves from that country." In the town of Macclesfield was a population of 40,000 to 50,000 persons, and it was his duty to defend them on all occasions from attacks made against them. It might be argued by some that if one particular employment was destroyed, the operatives of that employment might resort to theirs. That principle, however, he disregarded. It was not possible shoemakers could turn themselves into milliners, or other trades make equally strange metamorphoses. The hon. Member for Leicester said, he wished men of capital would enter the silk trade, though he (Mr. Brocklehurst) did not observe the hon. Member showed why they had hitherto kept away. He supposed, however, he wished an inference to be drawn that protection drove them from that trade. If such was the intended inference, he could not admit its truth. He had been entrusted with a petition to present to that House, signed by a large proportion of the manufacturing population of Macclesfield, which clearly evinced the feeling of the operatives upon the subject. These petitioners stated, that they perceived with deep regret that the remission of the silk duties in 1824, and the admission of foreign silk goods in 1826, had been regarded as successful measures, when their effects, as the petitioners stated, had been most disastrous to them—thousands of them having been thrown out of work, and been compelled to depend upon the public kitchen for their support; not the operatives only, but many of the small manufacturers had in consequence been ruined. The petitioners regarded the silk trade as one which ought to be preserved, in case of any depression in the cotton trade; and they therefore prayed such favourable consideration from the House as that branch of business might be thought worthy of at their hands. His hon. Friend had laid great stress upon

the circumstance of our exporting silk to France; but the fact was, that whilst we exported 20,000*l.* worth of silk goods, we imported from France 150,000*l.* worth. So much for the boasted reciprocity. The hon. Member proceeded to quote at some length from Mr. Deacon Hume's evidence before the Committee on the Silk Trade, in 1832, in support of the views which he had entertained. It was said that the effect of maintaining the duties was to give encouragement to smuggling; but it was quite possible to prevent smuggling, unless it took place with the connivance of the officers. It was quite evident, from the returns which had been laid on the Table of the House, that the Government had not obtained as great an amount of duty under the existing system as they would have obtained under the former system.

SIR G. CLERK said, that the hon. Member for Dorsetshire had, at the commencement of his speech, promised to show that the silk trade was a case in which not only temporary but permanent injury had been inflicted, by the alterations in our fiscal system which had taken place in 1824 and 1825. The hon. Member had entirely rested his statement on the evidence taken before the Select Committee of 1832, of which he was a Member; and the hon. Member wished to make it appear that the Government of that day had felt such doubts as to the expediency of retaining the new system which had been introduced two years previously, that they willingly consented to inquiry. But the then Vice-President of the Board of Trade, the late Lord Sydenham, distinctly stated to the House that he went into the Committee, not entertaining the slightest doubt of the soundness of Mr. Huskisson's policy; without any intention of increasing the duty on silks, and still less of reverting to the exploded system of prohibition, but because he considered that the rates fixed in 1826 were too high, that they held out a temptation to the smuggler, and he made an addition to the instruction to the effect, that the Committee was to consider what steps could be taken for the prevention of smuggling. He admitted that several witnesses had made statements as to the distress among the operative silk weavers in consequence of the fall of wages: he did not deny that at particular seasons great distress did prevail in the silk trade, as in every other branch of our manufactures; but the hon. Member should have shown that such distress was peculiar to the silk

manufactures, and also that it had arisen entirely since the alteration in the duty. The hon. Member should have referred to the evidence which had been taken before Committees at former periods, and the statements then made as to the state of the silk trade while enjoying the highest degree of protection. Had the hon. Member read the statement of Sir Fowell Buxton, made at the Mansion House in 1816, when a meeting was called to take into consideration the distressed state of silk weavers? Why, the distress of 1841 was nothing as compared to the distress of 1816, when the people were dying in the ditches about Bethnal Green. Neither was such distress confined to 1816. Sir Fowell Buxton referred to 1812, and the exertions rendered necessary on that occasion. Then in 1818, they had petitions from the silk weavers of Coventry, and a Select Committee was appointed to inquire into the facts. The distress then was infinitely greater than in 1832, and statements were put forth that the best men were working 100 hours in the week, and only obtaining 5s. 9d. wages. Therefore, when the hon. Member quoted particular years, he ought to admit that the distress to which he alluded had not been caused by the alteration of the duties in 1826, seeing that greater distress than had occurred subsequent to the alteration had previously taken place under all the supposed advantages of monopoly. The misfortune of the silk trade had always been that it was a manufacture of an article of luxury, and therefore liable to be affected by the wildest caprices of fashion. Sometimes the operatives were in full employment at high wages, at others they were completely destitute of employment and the means of subsistence. This state of things was aggravated also by absurd regulations, because by the Spitalfields Act it was impossible to give higher or lower wages than was fixed by the Act. The manufacturer was prevented, under a heavy penalty, from offering wages higher or lower than such as he found fixed in a certain table. What was the consequence? The manufacturer, who under other circumstances might continue to employ the men in slack seasons at lower wages, was obliged to discontinue employment altogether; and the men were at once reduced to starvation, while the trade was ultimately driven from Spitalfields to Macclesfield and Manchester, where they were not exposed to the consequences of such absurd restrictions. In 1826 the language was,

"Give us a few years to get out of the trade, as your changes will destroy it;" but the trade had been in a more flourishing condition since than before. What were the tests by which the state of a trade was to be ascertained? If they found that the importation of the raw material used in the manufacture, and that the export of the manufactured article, had increased, was not that a proof of extension? Silk was now no longer considered a luxury, to be exclusively engrossed by the rich, but was extensively used by the middle and even the humbler classes; and it was clear that if the duty had not been reduced, that would not have taken place. If they wished to discourage the use of silk goods, they could not adopt a better means than by re-introducing the system which had been in force previous to 1824. By that system a duty was imposed on the raw material, and a minimum of wages was fixed, so that at some periods enormous profits were realized, while at others complete destitution prevailed. It was impossible for the trade to flourish under such restrictions; and, accordingly, he found, on referring to the returns made on the subject, that from 1765 to 1817—a period including the triennial period after the peace—that the silk trade had only doubled; whereas, since 1817 up to the present time, it had more than trebled. The hon. Member for Macclesfield had referred to printed papers to corroborate his assertion with regard to the exportation of the coarser descriptions of silk manufacture. It was true that we exported a quantity of silk yarn, certainly of an inferior description to the fine Italian yarns; but he found that of the whole quantity of raw silk imported only about five per cent. was exported, and that the average value of such silk was not 7s. 6d. a lb., but between 60s. and 70s. a lb. The hon. Member for Leicester had stated, that we could not compete with France in the manufacture of lighter fabrics. He believed that there was no doubt that our silk manufactures were quite equal in texture, quality, and colour, to any that could be manufactured at Lyons, and that the only thing they were superior to us in was taste. He felt convinced, that the only way for them to get over that difficulty, was by entering upon a fair competition with the French manufacturers. The hon. Member said, that the silk trade had not increased to the same extent as the cotton trade. But the cotton trade had never been protected to the same extent as the silk trade, but

in a great measure had been left to rest on its own energies. The hon. Gentleman had also referred to the subject of wages. Upon no subject was it more difficult to obtain accurate information. With regard to the silk trade, he believed that all, without exception, were paid by piece work; and nothing could be more erroneous than to compare the prices paid to a weaver for a particular piece of goods twenty years ago, and the price paid him at the present time; for the improvement made in looms enabled a workman to execute now a far greater quantity of work than he could do twenty years ago even with the assistance of a boy. From the evidence taken before the Committee of 1832, it appeared that up to that time not the slightest improvement had been made in the looms of Spitalfields, and that they were in the same state as those which had been introduced by the French refugees more than a century previous. On referring to the Report on the State of Trade he found it stated, that immediately after the reduction of the duty in 1824 a greater stimulus was given to the manufacture, and that, during 1824 and 1825, the number of mills or spindles were more than doubled. Since that time improvements had been made by which the same number of spindles performed double the work they did previously, and on that account there had not been any great addition to the number of mills. But the hon. Member for Dorsetshire had asked, "Where had the silk trade gone, as he could not find any new silk mills in the north?" Why, the moment the fetters were taken off that trade, in 1824, a very great stimulus took place, and, at Macclesfield, advertisements appeared, stating that new mills had been erected, and that large numbers of hands were required; indeed, more mills were established than were required; for the improvement in the machinery was such that the mills were enabled to do double the work they did before; and, therefore, there had been no necessity for more mills; for the Report of Mr. Saunders, the Factory Commissioner, stated, that in 1843 the mill occupiers complained that they could not get hands enough, and that in Derby no fewer than 3,009 were employed. The Report went on further to say, that in March, 1844, four additional mills were set to work—that the total number of persons then employed in Derby amounted to 4,000 persons—and, that there was a difficulty experienced in obtaining a supply of hands,

in consequence of the millowners showing a preference for those persons whose labour was more valuable from previous experience. It was, therefore, clear by this Report, that, whatever might have been the state of the silk trade fifteen years ago, that in the years 1843 and 1844 the millowners could not procure enough of hands to meet the demand for their manufactures. Having thus referred to the past and present state of the silk trade, he confessed he was at a loss to know where he was to look for evidence to prove that the silk trade was at this moment depressed. Trade had of late years, beyond all question, considerably increased; for since the reduction upon thrown silk, four times the quantity of raw silk had been manufactured; and, consequently, an increased number of persons had been employed. The hon. Members for Dorset and Macclesfield had maintained that, because silk was a luxury, and because it was extensively used in its manufactured state by the wealthy, it ought to be subject to a high duty, in order that a large revenue might be derived from it. He admitted that silk in its manufactured state was in a great part consumed by the wealthier classes; but he did not infer from that fact that the revenue would be benefited by the imposition of a high duty. Under the former system an *ad valorem* duty of from 25 to 30 per cent. had been charged upon some articles, while upon others 40 and even 50 per cent. had been charged; but the imposition of those heavy duties failed to increase materially the revenue, while it encouraged smuggling, and tended to the evasion of the duty. It was his impression that the proposed reduced duty would produce a larger amount of revenue than had hitherto been obtained, because the imports would be greater, and an effective check would be put upon the contraband trade. He was sure that the Coventry and Macclesfield silk weavers would not apprehend any injury from an *ad valorem* duty of 15 per cent.; but that on the contrary, the impetus which their trade would receive from a relaxation of the prohibitory law would have the effect of making that important branch of industry more prosperous than it had hitherto been. The House had been told, that since the year 1826 the silk trade had been injured by the reduction of duties that had already taken place; but this was not so, for upon the best authorities it had been proved that the silk trade was at present in a more flourishing condition

than it had been for many years. Under those circumstances, he trusted the House would, by a large majority, support the Resolution proposed by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. NEWDEGATE remarked that the impression among those connected with the silk trade seemed to be that of deep regret that the Government felt it necessary to propose a reduction of duty upon foreign silks. Such were the expressions of the petitions presented from Coventry, even when in favour of free trade. The right hon. Baronet (Sir George Clerk) had quarrelled with the hon. Member for Dorsetshire (Mr. Bankes), because he quoted from the evidence taken before the Select Committee in 1842; but in his opinion the present discussion savoured very much of the spirit of that Committee; and he thought that the conduct of Sir Henry Parnell, who voted on the Report of that Committee without hearing the evidence, was strictly analogous to the present conduct of Her Majesty's Ministers. He did not think that the right hon. Baronet had proved that an increase of wages had taken place since the relaxation of duty. In his opinion, so far from there being an increase, there had been a very considerable reduction. How could those who were anxious for the relaxation of prohibitory duties improve the state of the silk weaver, by removing the slight protection that was at present extended to his industry, when their French competitors set the fashions which ruled the trade, and had almost at their doors the raw material? But they said the trade was at present in a flourishing condition. He would grant that; and in doing so would ask whether there could be any better argument for proving that protection ought to be continued? The hon. Member for Leicester had remarked, that in 1824 he advocated protection for silk, because the Corn Laws were then in existence; but as they were to be removed, and other duties on articles of food were also to be removed, there would be a fairer competition amongst manufacturers, who would prosper in consequence. That was certainly a characteristic argument. Did it not prove that the hon. Member looked to the repeal of the provision laws as a means for reducing wages? He (Mr. Newdegate) had no doubt that object had great weight with master manufacturers, and that they would not be slow in the reduction of wages. He admitted that he felt roused when he

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heard hon. Gentlemen maintain that the silk weavers would not be affected by the reduction of duty upon foreign silk manufactures. He lived among them, and had continual opportunities of knowing their sentiments upon the subject; and one of those millowners, who had lately erected a large factory, informed him, that had he known, twelve months before, the intentions of the Government, not one stone of that building should have been laid. He would now allude to the aggregate quantities of silk entered for consumption in decennial periods, with a view to show that the increase of the quantity imported, without relation to its quality, was not the fair criterion of prosperity which the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) would have them believe. The right hon. Baronet's (Sir Robert Peel's) explanatory statement of quantities of silk entered for home consumption, from 1814 to 1834, showed—

In the ten years.	Raw.	Knubs, &c.	Thrown.	All sorts.
1814—1823	15,214,245	585,906	3,606,872	19,406,023
1824—1833	32,916,905	2,891,515	3,872,828	39,681,248
1834—1843	37,425,114	11,924,815	2,657,189	52,007,118

But of what quality was this increase constituted? Why, almost entirely of waste knubs and husks, as he (Mr. Newdegate) would show. The aggregate quantities entered for consumption for ten years, appeared by the table he held in his hand to be as follows:—

Total from 1834 to 1843	52,007,118
Knubs, &c., 1834 to 1843	11,924,815
Raw and Thrown	41,082,303
Total from 1824 to 1833	39,681,248
Knubs from 1824 to 1833	2,891,515
Raw and Thrown from 1824 to 1833...	36,789,733
Raw and Thrown from 1834 to 1843...	41,082,303
Raw and Thrown from 1824 to 1833...	36,789,733
Increase of Raw and Thrown	4,292,570

By this statement it appeared that the great increase had been in the inferior articles, waste knubs and husks, which only contained 25 per cent. of real silk, but which, by peculiar industry, had been wrought up in the consumption. The proportion of knubs, &c., as compared with raw and thrown silk, was, in the ten years of the protecting period ending 1823, 1-40th of the whole quantity entered for home consumption; whilst in the latter

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period ending 1843, it had risen to 1·5th of the whole quantity entered for home consumption; and in that proportion had the value of our trade deteriorated since 1823. Those were the happy results of free trade; and he would ask whether, after this deterioration of their products, the ribbon weaver was in a fit condition to be exposed to further competition? It had been asked how was it that they then competed with the foreigner, whilst more highly taxed, and labouring under burdens their rivals had not to bear? His answer was simply the fact, that the English operative worked harder than the foreigner. They thus competed, whilst France set the fashions against them; and in proof of their exertions he adduced this fact, that at the present moment, when for once they had fashion on their side in the manufacture of the seven-inch ribbon, the Coventry men had outdone their foreign rivals, with all their advantages of home-grown silk and light taxation. Let him not, then, be taunted with the empty assertion, that the energies of the ribbon trade needed bracing to exertion by further exposure to the breeze of unequal competition. The right hon. Baronet who had last addressed the House (Sir G. Clerk) had dwelt upon the difficulty of collecting these duties. That might well be the case, for he had heard that some of the Custom-house officers were so ignorant that they were unable to ascertain the difference between plain silk and fancy silk. He had made an application to Government upon a former occasion, that they would appoint competent officers to examine these goods, but his application had not been attended to. The late disclosure respecting the extensive frauds in the Custom House, however, clearly showed that if the Government had been anxious to collect the duties they might have accomplished it. If a direct taxation (towards which he recognised a leaning on the part of the Government) were substituted for indirect, he did not think it would be much more easy of collection; at least, previous experience did not lead them to indulge in the hope that it would. He confessed he felt it a heavy tax upon his patience when he heard it asserted that the silk and ribbon weavers had not laboured to improve their products, when he knew of his own knowledge such was not the truth. In Coventry and its neighbourhood they had laboured to meet the spirit of competition that was abroad; and the manufacturers there had been eminently

successful, as the evidence of the hon. Member for Leicester testified. He would not detain the House further than to implore the Government, as it was about to depress the agricultural interests, that it would not add to the difficulties of the labourers of his neighbourhood, by removing protection from the labour on which the subsistence of his family depended. The Government seemed actuated in this matter by a false feeling of consistency; and he thought that before sacrificing his constituents for such a reason, they might as well remember that it was not upon their consistency they could base any very strong claim to the confidence of the country.

Mr. HAWES would not trouble the House with any lengthy observations; for though he attached much importance to the inconvenience which delay would undoubtedly be productive of to the various branches of commerce interested in the settlement, still he rejoiced at it, because it would tend to show that the principles held by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government (Sir R. Peel) were safe and valuable measures, and likely to promote the prosperity of the country at large. He confessed he had looked forward to the debate of that night with more than ordinary interest, because he fully expected that the challenge which the right hon. Baronet had offered would have been met on the silk question. The right hon. Baronet had challenged any hon. Member of the House to instance a single case in which either the consumer or the producer had been injured by the withdrawal of protection; and he (Mr. Hawes) therefore thought that, in the course of a debate which had already lasted three or four hours, some hon. Gentlemen on the protection benches would have adduced evidence to show that either the consumer or the producer had been injured, and that the progress of trade had been retarded by the relaxation of prohibitory duties. But no hon. Member had accepted the challenge, and up to the present moment no facts had been adduced in support of the protective system, or tending to invalidate the assertion made by the right hon. Baronet. What, he would ask, were the tests of improving manufactures? Were they observable in the import of the raw material, or in the export of the manufactured article? If they were, all returns upon the subject showed that the imports of raw silk had greatly increased, and that the exports of the manufactured article had also increased. Did hon. Gentlemen re-

member the statements that had been made with respect to the probable amount of injury that would be inflicted upon the silk trade when Mr. Huskisson reduced his tariff? Upon that occasion it was said that every thing would be in favour of the foreigner, and that the English manufacturer would have no chance in competing; for the moment that the relaxed duties came into operation the French would take possession of the market, and the English manufacturer would be ruined. But what had been the case? The imports had not decreased, neither had the exports decreased; but on the contrary, all the evidence that could be collected, and all the facts that could be brought to bear upon the subject, showed that trade had prospered more under a relaxation of duties, than ever it had done under the system of protection. The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Broeklehurst) had alluded to the low rate of wages received by silk weavers in this country as compared with foreigners, and had accounted for it by the relaxation of duties that had already taken place. This was an important subject, and deserving of the fullest consideration. He was willing to admit the state of things that with regard to all traders which depended more or less on handloom weaving, a considerable reduction had taken place, but that distress was caused by competition between handloom weaver and handloom weaver. If the hon. Gentlemen who occupied the protection benches had read the Report of Mr. Muggeridge, the Commissioner appointed to inquire into the condition of the silk weavers, they would find that the evidence adduced went to show that the cause of distress was not foreign competition, but competition among themselves. They were struggling against one another. The Report of the same Commissioner set forth that the loss of time caused by going to the masters for work, very much tended to reduce the wages of the operative, and that the defective state of their looms was another direct cause for their impoverishment. The factory system enabled millowners to improve their machinery, and thus successfully to compete with the foreigner; but the handloom weaver was not able thus to keep pace with the improvement of the age, and consequently suffered materially. Official returns showed that the declared value of British exports of manufactured silks had increased threefold since 1826, which was a strong argument for showing that the re-

laxation of duty had not injured the trade. The hon. Member for Macclesfield had quoted from Deacon Hume with respect to the state of trade up to the time the alteration in duty took place; but he had not continued the quotation to the next sentence, where a statement was made of the effect which followed in the three subsequent years. The hon. Gentleman had referred to the evidence of Mr. Deacon Hume, showing the amount of imports of raw and thrown silk in triennial periods from 1785 down to 1823; but the hon. Gentleman omitted the following sentence, in which Mr. Hume said—"I then take the three last years, 1829, 1830, and 1831, and find that in these years the raw silk was 3,075,000 lbs. against 1,900,000 lbs., and the thrown silk 374,000 lbs. against 355,000 lbs." He would venture to say that no trade had been so mischievously protected as the silk trade. With regard to the Spitalfields weavers, Mr. Deacon Hume said they were invaded by Manchester before they were invaded by Lyons. The Spitalfields weavers were ruined by the competition of Manchester and Macclesfield, when in point of fact they had a protected trade. The whole of Mr. Deacon Hume's evidence must be taken as adverse in the highest degree to the view of the hon. Member for Macclesfield. Mr. Deacon Hume was a public officer and a disinterested party; and therefore his authority was greater, and his opinion less prejudiced, than those of a silk manufacturer.

Mr. ADDERLEY said, that he did not think the principle on which hon. Members wished to uphold protection to agriculture, was at all applicable to the question before the House. He had received representations from his own county requesting him to support the Government measure of free trade. Amongst them was a letter from a manufacturer in Leek, who stated that he did not think those measures were calculated to do any injury to the manufacturers of the country; and that taking them altogether he thought they would prove highly beneficial. The writer also said, that it was supposed that Macclesfield was more likely to suffer than other towns, owing to the circumstances of its manufacturing so much fancy goods, for the manufacture of which France was so renowned; but having conversed with several of the manufacturers of Macclesfield on the subject, his correspondent stated, that without exception they all declared that they did not apprehend any ill result from

the proposed measures of the Government. At the close of his communication, he recommended the adoption of steps for promoting schools of design; many manufacturers, he observed, being of opinion that if as much pains were taken in this country to develop native talent as in France, they would soon be able to compete with the French in works of design. He was in favour of protection to agriculture; but with such a letter as that before him, and with no counter representation from the manufacturing interest, he could not consent to vote for the Amendment.

MR. ELLICE would not go minutely into the subject of this debate, which had been so well treated by those better versed in details. He had always stated his belief, even from the commencement of the discussions with regard to the silk manufacture, that it would be necessary to take the utmost care as to any measures that were applied to that trade. He never thought, however, that it would be possible to maintain the prohibition which many hon. Gentlemen thought to be indispensably necessary for the preservation of the trade to this country. In the original discussions he had always hinted it as his opinion that the silk manufacturers ought to look for relief rather from the peculiar burdens which affected them, and not their foreign competitors, than to the farther continuance of any great amount of protection. They had first the benefit of prohibition, and next of a large protecting duty; and they found neither one nor the other any security against the inroad of the smuggler. The time had arrived when the Government of the country proclaimed a great relaxation of the duties on provisions, and on other articles which particularly affect the producers in this as in all other industrial occupations. His constituents, though they had some apprehension as to the result, were still of opinion that it was their duty, in conformity with the general wishes of the country, rather to concur in the measures for the relaxation of the restrictions on trade, than to persist in requiring a protection which it would be impossible to secure against the inroad of the smuggler. It was very true, notwithstanding the accounts which were given from several quarters, that the condition of the artisans in some branches of the silk manufacture was far from that which he should wish to see. He was also aware that amongst his constituents certain branches of the ribbon manufacture had given way before the su-

perior art of the foreign manufacturer. In addition to that foreign competition, our manufacturers had to contend with a heavy export duty on the materials of finer descriptions of silk. All these considerations tended to make him less sanguine as to the immediate effects of the relaxation of duties on this peculiar branch of manufacture. But, on the other hand, his constituents felt they were about to receive a great measure of relief with respect to various articles; and he was happy to be able to assure the Government that they were perfectly willing to do the best they could to meet the new circumstances in which they were placed. They expressed their general satisfaction with the relaxation proposed, and more particularly for the removal of the duties on food; and in conformity with their wishes he should give his support to the measures of the Government.

LORD G. BENTINCK said: The right hon. Gentleman asked us, what our opinion is of the prosperity of any trade? I think we may say on this side of the House, that we think the best test of the prosperity of a trade is a general rise in wages; and we have it shown to demonstration, that in every branch of the silk trade the wages have been gradually reduced since the alteration of the law from protection to free trade. The hon. Gentleman the Member for Leicester admitted at once that the number of Spitalfields weavers had been reduced from 14,000 to 9,000, through the effects of free trade. I think that fact affords pretty strong evidence of the injury inflicted on silk manufacturers by the operation of free-trade measures. The right hon. Gentleman the Vice-President of the Board of Trade, in answering—which, in my opinion, he did not do in the slightest degree—the most able speech by which my hon. Friend the Member for Dorsetshire proposed the Amendment, jumbled up the whole of the trade from 1816 to 1845. He mixed up the trade during the ten years of protection with that which occurred during the twenty years of free trade; and then he said, “See how under free trade, during the last thirty years, the trade of the silk manufacturer has prospered. For fifty years before 1816, the silk trade had only doubled; while in the thirty years subsequent to that period the silk trade had trebled.” Why, good God! the first fifty years were years of war; and is it fair to compare the state of a trade carried on during war, and which depends for its subsistence on the raw material im-

ported from a country which, during a great portion of that period, was in the hands of Napoleon—in the hands of an enemy of this country—is it fair, I ask, to compare the state of a trade carried on under those circumstances with the state of that trade during a period of peace? Is it fair to compare the state of trade during a period of war, when we were paying 70,000,000*l.* of taxes, with the state of that trade during a period of peace, when we were only paying 50,000,000*l.*? Taking the nine last years of the thirty referred to, which nine years were years of protection, and, comparing them with the former years, it will be found that, in six of those years, the silk manufacture had prospered and progressed at the rate of ninety per cent., while under the twenty-one years of free trade that manufacture had only increased a hundred per cent. Can any man contend that a trade which, in twenty-one years, had only increased one hundred per cent., had prospered in an equal degree with a trade which increased at the rate of ninety per cent. in six years? The hon. Gentleman the Member for Lambeth has appealed to the immense increase in the exportation of silk manufactures; but I cannot ascertain from the Paper lately laid on the table of the House, where he finds that great increase in the exportation of silk manufactures. I will take two periods of five years each. I will compare the last five years with the five years preceding; and what do I find to be the result? I find that the average exportation of silk manufactures for the five years ending 1840 was 771,908*l.* in value; while in the last five years, during which the hon. Gentleman told you that the exportation of silk manufactures had so largely increased, the average amount of exportation was but 709,582*l.*, showing a decrease of 62,326*l.* in the average value of silk exported from this country. Now, let us look how the matter stands as regards the importation of silk manufactures from the countries in Europe. And here I must take leave to say that, whilst Her Majesty's Government have given us the amount of the exportation to all the countries in the world, when they professed to give us the importation of silk manufactures, they excluded the importation from the East Indies. Notwithstanding that, however, on comparing the same periods of five years already mentioned, I find that the average weight of silk manufactures imported during the five years ending 1840,

was 220,000 lbs., the value of which, estimating them at 3*l.* the pound weight—which I am sure is under the mark—would be 660,000*l.*; but during the last period of five years the value of the silk, estimating it at the same rate, was 715,586*l.*, showing an increase in the value of the silk imported of 55,586*l.*, which is exactly within 5,000*l.* a year of the decrease in the exportation of silk manufactures from this country. You perceive, then, that the increased importation of silk manufactures from abroad, and the decrease in the exportation of silk manufactures from this country, travel on *pari passu*, and afford pretty strong proof that the silk manufactures of this country are not in a condition, even with a protection of thirty per cent., to contend with the manufactures of France. Sir, the hon. Gentleman the Member for Staffordshire (Mr. Adderley) has expressed an opinion that it is no business of this House to interfere in matters where the parties immediately concerned do not ask for such interference. I thought the Constitution of this country required that we should consider what is best for the general good of the country; and that it was not for us to wait to be taught by the constituencies what is for the interest of the country. We have well considered this question. It is one which has been before the country, and before the Parliament, for twenty-five years, and we think ourselves as well qualified to judge of this matter as any manufacturers that may live at Leek or elsewhere. But if any hon. Gentleman thinks that the manufacturers of this country desire to see this measure carried, I can tell him a different story. The hon. Gentleman who last spoke knows the character of the three gentlemen who called on me yesterday morning. And what did they say? Why, that if they submitted at all, it was because they feared the tyranny of this House. They thought the manufacturers entitled to greater protection; but they were afraid of the coalition of Gentlemen on this side of the House and Gentlemen opposite; and that if they asked all they wanted, and all they thought needful for them, they might lose even the small modicum of protection which Her Majesty's Ministers are willing to give them. What did these gentlemen tell me? Why, that since there was a free trade in silk, only two mills had been erected in Coventry—that Coventry stood still, while St. Etienne, its rival town in France, flourished—that St. Etienne flourished at the expense of Coventry. These

gentlemen put into my hands a paper showing the different patterns of silk manufacture. The article at the head of these patterns, they informed me, is the least valuable, and that the only article which they are now able to manufacture in Coventry, and which they retain against the competition of foreigners—that article is plain silk ribbons—an article estimated at 39s. per lb. From the manufacture of satin ribbons, which the Government say are worth 53s. per lb., but which the manufacturer states to be worth 75s. per lb., Coventry has been entirely driven, even under a protection of 35 per cent. What chance, then, is there of retaining this manufacture there, with a protection of 15 per cent.? The Government, I understand, have adopted as a criterion of the averages an article called *Louisine*, which is not worth 15s. a pound, and which the manufacturers tell me forms only a thirty-second part of goods of this description manufactured in Coventry. They also assured me that the advisers of Her Majesty's Ministers and of the Board of Trade were gentlemen whose interest it was to admit as much foreign goods as possible; that they were wholesale dealers, (and I believe the hon. Gentleman the Member for Leicester is one,) and proprietors of what are commonly known as "slaughter-houses." These men employ very few people. Two or three of these great houses reap enormous profits, and it is their interest to drive the English manufacturer out of the market, and to make their purchases in France, or anywhere that they may buy cheapest. Her Majesty's Ministers have listened to these men. Two or three of these large houses, called "slaughter-houses," employ about 150 persons, the greater part of whom, I understand, are employed in London during what is called "the season;" and at the end of the season they are sent about their business. How can the number employed by those slaughter-houses be compared with those generally employed in the silk trade? From the Population Returns, I find that 58,200 persons are engaged in the silk trade, in addition to which there are several thousand ribbon makers, and about 30,000 others not particularly distinguished. Can you compare a trade that occupies at the outside not more than a thousand persons, with a trade which gives occupation and subsistence to very nearly 70,000 persons? There is another article, the last but not the least valuable in this list—I mean striped and figured gauze.

The hon. Member for Leicester was obliged to admit that already the ribbon weavers of Coventry were driven from this trade. Figured gauze is worth 180s. a lb., but the silk of which it is made is not worth more at the outside than 28s. a lb. Then, all the difference between 28s. and 180s. is spent in labour, and is lost to the manufacturers of that locality. To drive the English artisan out of the market, the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government is going to reduce the duty now paid—namely, from 27s. 6d. to 14s. But if Coventry could not withstand the opposition of French gauze with a duty of 27s. 6d., it was quite clear that it could not compete with it when that duty would be reduced to 14s. 6d. I shall now advert to the subject of wages, and on that point I did expect that the Member for Coventry would manifest a greater interest, and certainly a larger share of sympathy. What did those gentlemen tell me, to whom I before referred on the subject of wages? They declared that the rate of wages was reduced 20 per cent. since the year 1826. I speak on the authority of those three gentlemen whom I before mentioned, who assured me, and I rely on their word, for I believe them to be men of truth and veracity, they positively stated to me that since 1826, in Coventry, the wages of the ribbon weavers were reduced fully 20 per cent.; and they were so low at present that it was scarcely possible to sink them lower; for, to enable the manufacturers to compete with opposition, they were obliged to drag those unfortunate ribbon weavers, who worked at their looms in the midst of their own families, to mills and to factories, so that their wages might be reduced to the lowest point. It was then perfectly clear that, unless the House were prepared to destroy every remnant of the trade of Coventry, it could not consent to the measure propounded by the Government. I shall next go to Macclesfield. The hon. Member who represents that town is a living witness of some of the consequences of free trade there. That hon. Member is a banker as well as a silk manufacturer; and he was a member of a deputation which waited on the late Mr. Huskisson in 1823 or 1824 to protest against a law which had for its object the removal of protection. He prophesied what too truly happened—for, instead of that hon. Member listening to all those dreams of prosperity which he was told would arise by the removal of those causes which bound the silk trade to

the earth, and which prevented its soaring to a similar elevation with that of Coventry, he foresaw all the fatal consequences; so that while others drove forward in their fatal speculations, he held in his own hands a check which prevented an immediate and a destructive career. The hon. Member became a lender of money to many poor manufacturers, and to a very large amount; so that in many cases he had to become the unwilling possessor of mills; among others there was one mill which cost 14,000*l.*, and which became his for 1,700*l.* That was the way by which he was enabled to carry on his trade in Macclesfield. I ask, do you call that prosperity? Was that any strong proof of the success of the free-trade scheme? In the Amendment proposed to the House, the silk manufacturer and the ribbon weaver are not the only persons concerned: there are also included in that Amendment the milliner and the dressmaker; and they formed not an insignificant class of persons, for I can tell you that the dressmakers amount to no less than 106,000 persons; and are you going so to affect that protection on silk dresses which would reduce it from 2*l.* 10*s.* to 1*l.* 10*s.*? There are 106,000 dressmakers in England—there are 15,000 in London alone. Of the 106,000, more than one-third are engaged in Coventry. Am I to suppose you will leave all those individuals with their families to starve—am I to suppose you will leave them to take their chance for future subsistence—am I to suppose they will be left to drag out a miserable existence because they cannot approach this House, or loudly and intelligibly knock at its doors? Are the poor dressmakers to be left to pine in misery because they cannot vote for Members of Parliament—because they cannot employ the hon. Gentlemen for Finsbury, or for London, or for Westminster, to plead their cause—because they cannot have the benefit of their able advocacy? But is that a reason why their interests should be forgotten, why their claims to public consideration should be overlooked? By no means; the milliners and the dressmakers are a useful and an industrious class of the community, and their interests shall not be assailed, without at least the benefit of my humble advocacy. The present amount of protection on hats and bonnets was 25*s.*, and which it was proposed to reduce to 6*s.*; that was to nearly one-fourth. The present protection on caps is 15*s.*, which is to be reduced

to 3*s.* 6*d.*, also nearly one-fourth; so that, under circumstances so distressing, the poor dressmakers will find their occupation all but gone. I brought before the House the other night what was the consequence of free trade in 1826; many of those milliners and dressmakers being thrown out of employment, had to seek an asylum in workhouses; numbers, from absolute want and from dire necessity, sacrificing their virtue, had to commence a life of prostitution; and you may depend upon it that the recurrence of similar evils will be the natural result of the measure now before the House if it pass into a law. Similar, I predict, will be the fate of many of the milliners and dressmakers of London. The want of employment will force them to seek a refuge in the workhouse, or probably drive them to the streets, to the increase of demoralization. Looking on these things as the natural consequence of the measure, I pray the House to pause before so large a number of our fellow creatures are cast abroad in penury and in wretchedness. All they ask for is the continuance of 30 per cent.; and let them have it. I implore the House, on their behalf, to permit the continuance of a boon so trifling, but a boon which will keep them from ruin—which will save them from destruction. I implore you to exercise your sympathy for them, and not to allow that reduction in the duty which will so seriously affect their interests. I fear, however, from the coalition which has been formed with Her Majesty's Ministers, there is little hope of success; and yet I cannot but expect that those whose duty it is to look after the morals of the people, will save from degradation—will save from prostitution—will save from wretchedness, from poverty, and from impending ruin, the milliners and dressmakers of this country.

SIR R. PEEL: Sir, I hope that any parties who may have to exercise a judgment upon the principles of commercial policy which it may be advantageous to apply to the silk trade, will maturely consider the facts that are within their reach before they come to any conclusion upon the mere impulse of feeling; that they will take the opportunity of contrasting the state of things which has arisen, not under a system of free trade, as my noble Friend has assumed, but since the repeal of prohibition and the admission of foreign silks to a qualified competition with domestic produce—with the state of things which presented itself during that happy period

when, so far as the law was concerned, you had absolute and unqualified protection. You have the opportunity of ascertaining what were the results of unqualified legal and nominal protection in that most favoured seat—I mean so far as law can favour it—of Spitalfields. You had there complete prohibition of foreign manufactures; you relied upon laws prohibiting the import of those manufactures. Not only were the duties high, but they were absolutely prohibitory. Your policy was prohibition. Well, what was the state of things there under prohibition? Do you wish to revert to it? Do you believe that it would be for the interest of the working classes, for the interest of morality—do you believe that it would protect the females to whom my noble Friend has in the last part of his speech referred, from the temptations and dangers of prostitution? In Spitalfields what was the state of commerce? Why, periodically and in rapid succession, there were presented examples of suffering and vice which I defy you to parallel by anything that has taken place since the removal of prohibition. I begin with the year 1806; in that year a letter was written by Mr. Hale, a gentleman well acquainted with the state of Spitalfields, addressed to Mr. Whitbread, calling on him to make an appeal to the Legislature against the state of things existing in that district. Six years afterwards, in 1812, such was the condition of that district, that it became necessary to appoint a local committee; and the Report of that committee, made at a subsequent period, in reference to the attempts made to relieve the distress, states—

“When a depression in trade materially diminishes the demand for labour, multitudes are at once deprived of employment, and suffer all the miseries of want. The applications to the parishes for support soon become more than they can relieve. A large proportion of those who are called on for the poor rates are themselves at these times in need of assistance, and under such circumstances to advance the assessment would increase the difficulty of collecting it, and often render the payment altogether impossible. Thus the utmost pittance that can be dealt out to the indigent is insufficient to support existence, and the distress becomes extreme.”

This was the state of Spitalfields and its neighbourhood when the association was first instituted in 1812; committees were formed, and subscriptions raised; and there was a temporary mitigation of distress. From the exertions made at that time, the committee had the happiness to know that many were rescued from pe-

rishing; but in 1816 it became necessary to reappoint the committee. They then speak particularly of the weavers:—

“They are inoffensive,” they say, “and quiet in their demeanour, industrious in prosperous times, and peaceable in adversity.”

The operations of the committee were suspended as soon as the pressing necessity for them ceased; but they soon felt themselves “imperatively called upon to resume them by an extent and severity of distress that has not been equalled at any former period within our knowledge.” They say, speaking of the weavers in 1816:—

“Of this class nearly two-thirds are at this time unemployed, and without the means of support; as well as a multitude of porters, labourers, and mechanics in different trades. They cannot disperse themselves in the country, which is already overburdened with poor, and where, at former times of difficulty, temporary work might have been obtained; numbers of old hands are now dismissed. Even the resource of the army and navy no longer exists for the destitute; and many are refused admission at the workhouses, which are too crowded to receive them. In order the better to assist the most afflicting cases, as more than 100 members compose the committee, they have divided themselves into thirty-eight sub-committees, each of which undertakes the visiting of a district. During the last eleven weeks, they have paid more than 8,460 visits, and distributed £567., mostly in sums of from 1s. to 3s., among 3,366 families, which contain about 14,400 individuals; and while engaged in this service, they have witnessed an extremity of suffering of which those who are not themselves accustomed to explore the abodes of poverty can form but an inadequate idea. They find numbers who had been accustomed to support their families respectably, reduced from long want of employment to sell or pawn their furniture, which had been purchased with the savings of former years, to obtain food. Their bedding, their clothes, and the very looms and tools on which they were accustomed to depend for subsistence, are, in many instances, gone; and little is left them but the bare walls of their rooms. Pauperism is spreading to an extent truly alarming. Many decent families have had all they were possessed of seized to pay arrears of rent; others are deeply in debt for the common necessities of life; some have deserted their homes in despair, unable to endure the sight of their starving families; and many pine under lingering diseases, brought on from the want of food and clothing.”

That Report was made in 1816, and then such was the distress that 100 members formed themselves into sub-committees, in order that they might visit the various districts, and relieve the people at a time when the trade enjoyed all the advantages of protection. A meeting was convened in the city of London, and Sir Powell Buxton (then Mr. Buxton) gave an account of the state of Spitalfields under this system. He said—

"We have all been educated in the belief that the necessity of going to the workhouse is the limit of human distress to the poor, yet such is the aggravated state of distress, that going to the workhouse is an object of absolute desire to the poor, and we are actually canvassed for our interest in their favour."

What were the assigned causes of that distress? Sir Fowell Buxton made an appeal to those who were then attending that meeting, and it shows how delusive was this protection. He said—

"One of the causes of the distress under which Spitalfields is labouring, is the importation of French goods, and the wearing of them by the ladies of this town. If you will accompany us through those scenes of destitution and distress, at least we shall gain this advantage, that we shall discourage the use of contraband goods which destroy the means of subsistence of the inhabitants of Spitalfields."

A conclusive proof that though you professed to give them the advantages of absolute prohibition, yet your revenue laws were defeated in spite of prohibitory duties, and you did not succeed in giving them those advantages. Well, then, let me compare that account of 1816, under protection, with the Report which we have last received from the district superintended by Mr. Howell, that made in October, 1845. Mr. Howell says—

"Throughout the entire district a general scarcity of hands is noticed, and a consequent rise of wages. In the silk districts particularly, hands are very scarce, and I have been informed that instances are not wanting where children working half time have got as much wages, and in some cases it is said that they get more, than they did when they worked ten hours. I am told that a rise has also taken place in the wages of those who work ten and twelve hours respectively."

Well, I contrast that Report from that district with the Report I have read from the Committee of 1816. In the one case you had, not indeed prohibition, but heavy duties; in the other case, you professed to give complete prohibition. Sir, we ask what are the tests by which you determine a flourishing manufacture? We say the import of the raw material has increased. Oh, but (you say) in the returns of the raw material are included certain descriptions of waste silk, called knubs and husks. But if you wanted a conclusive proof of the beauty and nicety to which our machinery has attained, it would be derived from the introduction of that species of manufacture. The terms may be vulgar, and may not suit the lips of some hon. Gentlemen; but you have improved those knubs and husks; by your skill and talent you have converted them into a

beautiful material, and you have thus greatly increased the quantity of the raw material consumed. But let us exclude the knubs and husks. My noble Friend (Lord G. Bentinck) says that the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Brocklehurst) went before the Committee of Mr. Huskisson in 1824, and advised Mr. Huskisson on no account to incur the danger he was about to incur; but that Mr. Huskisson most unwisely refused his advice. What was the result? And what reflection do facts and figures throw upon Mr. Huskisson, for not having listened to the advice then given him? When that advice was given him—and here I throw out the knubs and husks from the account altogether—when that advice was given, that is to say, in 1819 or 1820, the quantity of raw silk entered for home consumption was about 1,500,000 lbs. On an average of the ten years from 1814 to 1823—I am speaking now of raw silk alone, rejecting altogether the waste silk—the annual consumption, when that advice was given to Mr. Huskisson, was 1,521,000 lbs. Mr. Huskisson rejected the advice; he substituted comparatively moderate duties for absolute prohibition; and the average consumption of raw silk in the ten years from 1834 to 1843, had risen from 1,521,000 lbs. to 3,742,000 lbs., as it appears to me, justifying the wisdom of the decision to which Mr. Huskisson came; and so far as the consumption of the raw material can be a test of a flourishing manufacture, showing that Mr. Huskisson was right in substituting moderate duties for prohibition. But is the feeling of the trade a test of success? From the trade itself I have received no such representations as those which have been referred to by hon. Members this evening. Take Coventry. I venture to say that if Coventry had felt any real alarm at the lowering of the protection from 30 to 15 per cent., she has energy and intelligence enough to make her representations known; but Coventry argues as other places argue—she sees that we do not propose an abstract reduction of the duties on silk; she sees, coincident with that reduction, a total repeal of the duty on meat; she sees the admission of maize at a nominal duty; she sees also a great reduction in the duties on the chief articles of subsistence, and the ultimate repeal of all those duties. Coventry foresees the benefits of these changes, and she is perfectly content with the reduction of the duty on silk, looking at the whole of

the measures proposed by Her Majesty's Government. What is the case with respect to Leek? My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire went to Leek as a protectionist, expecting to be received with applause, and he was surprised to find them contented and satisfied with the proposals of the Government. Then, with respect to the letter from Macclesfield: why, the letter was accompanied by a memorial from the parties, who stated they were perfectly content to submit to a reduction of duties, and Macclesfield would be satisfied with a reduction of from 30 to 20 per cent. We propose a reduction of 15 per cent. There is, therefore, a difference only of 5 per cent. between the representations of Macclesfield and the duty of the Government. From Spitalfields I cannot say that we have received many representations. I certainly received a deputation on the subject of silk; but when they looked at the other measures with which this reduction is accompanied, I do not think that there was any discontent expressed at the general measures of Her Majesty's Ministers. So far for the expressions of the trade; and I have a right to believe that the trade in general are satisfied with the whole measures which we propose. But my noble Friend (Lord G. Bentinck) has adopted another test. I say that we have a satisfactory result from the increased quantity of raw material entered for home consumption; but he will take only, as a test, the declared value of our exports during the period of the last five years. Now I say that this test is altogether fallacious. The late Mr. Alderman Waithman was always insisting that the country was ruined, because the declared value of our exports in cotton did not keep pace with the increase of our imports, and of our population; and he was always told that nothing could be more natural than that the declared value of cotton exported should not increase, for with the diminished cost of production, and the increase of mechanical facilities, the articles would, year by year, be sold for a diminished sum, and thus, though there was a greatly increased quantity produced and exported, yet the declared value of the exports at the Customs, would not increase in the same degree, might not increase at all, or might actually diminish. So it is with respect to silk. The cost of production has been diminished—during the last five years greatly diminished; the improvements in machin-

ery, and the greater skill of our workmen, have caused a diminished cost of production; during the last five years also the duty on the raw material has been diminished; it would be strange indeed, therefore, if the declared value of great quantities of exports had not also diminished. During the last five years, therefore, my noble Friend will find that though the declared value of our exports may have decreased, that circumstance affords no proof of the trade being injured. As we decreased the price of the raw material in cotton, so it is with silk; the declared value may be less, but there is no less quantity exported. Now I can readily account for the increased quantity of the raw material consumed. There is a growing taste for silk manufactures; it is a taste which we cannot do better than encourage. Cotton and wool have been heretofore formidable rivals with silk; and cotton and woollen goods have entered into general competition with silk goods. But there is a growing desire in this country for silk; and will it not be for the public advantage, by the low price of the article, to enable the public to consume it more largely, and shall we not be thereby doing the greatest possible advantage to the trade? Then, however, my noble Friend will say, that there will be an increase in the quantity of foreign articles brought into this country; and I agree with him that if we give a taste for silk manufactures, there will naturally be an increase in the importation of the foreign article. But, supposing that during the five years preceding the last there has been great smuggling of the foreign article—supposing that at the end of those five years we are enabled to check the Custom-house frauds, and thus to impede the illicit introduction of the foreign article—then, I say, that the increased duty paid for silk articles will afford no proof that the foreign trade is gaining ground, and is driving out our own manufactures. That is what I apprehend to be the real case with respect to silk generally, for under the duty of 30 per cent., smuggling has been carried to a very great extent. Twenty-five years ago this very article attracted the attention of the House of Lords, and formed part of the inquiry before the Committee on foreign trade. That very tribunal to which my noble Friend referred, as being the body to do justice to those parties whose distresses he detailed—that very tribunal which he hoped would reject this measure, if it should pass this

House—that very House of Lords appointed a Committee to inquire into the foreign trade of this country, and silk was one of the articles on which they reported; and what was the conclusion to which the House of Lords came in the year 1821? It was this:—

“That if a small duty only were levied on organzine silk, our manufactures would have nothing to dread from the competition of French silk, and that, even if the duty were reduced to 12 or 15 per cent., a considerable augmentation of exports might be reasonably expected.”

So the House of Lords, the very House of Lords to which my noble Friend appeals—that very tribunal—after mature consideration of the subject, after examining witnesses interested in the importation of silk, and interested in domestic manufactures, now twenty-five years ago, came to the conclusion that if we did reduce the duty on raw materials, the public interests would require that the duty on silk manufactures should not exceed 12 or 15 per cent. We take the duty at the largest of these two sums; and after an interval of twenty-five years, having reduced the duty on organzine silk, and upon all the raw material, and having given every advantage for the introduction of the raw material as far as we can, propose, not the greatest reduction of the duty on the article for the benefit of the consumer; but, after this lapse of a quarter of a century, we adopt not their lowest amount of 12 per cent., but the highest amount of 15 per cent.; and when the House of Lords shall refer to their own Report of their own Committee, I shall be surprised indeed if they do reject the present measure of Her Majesty's Government. My noble Friend has also referred to, and has naturally excited the sympathies of the House by placing before us the helpless and oppressed condition of that most unprotected class, the milliners and dressmakers of this country; but I think that if any class more than another have injuries inflicted upon them by the illicit introduction of goods which ought to pay the duty, it is the very class to which my noble Friend referred. I believe that contraband articles are largely introduced, and that there is a false reliance placed on protection. I believe that, at any time, upon payment of an insurance, silk goods and dresses to any amount and of the greatest cost, may be delivered in a contraband way for a sum not exceeding the duty which we propose. If this be so; if the taste for silk goods be on the increase; if we promote a still greater increased con-

sumption by reducing the price of the article; if we enable the manufacturer to meet competition by compelling the sale in open day of the duty-paid article; if he be no longer subjected to the disadvantage of not knowing with whom and with what he has to compete; if we prevent the smugglers, who pay no duty, from meeting the honest trader, and inflicting great loss and injury from this competition in the disposal of his articles—the manufacturer of silk and the operative will have a better chance of employment, and of gaining that honest subsistence which they ought to gain from their continuous labours, than any advantage which they can derive from high nominal duties which we cannot enforce, for we cannot prevent the law being evaded. These are the considerations which have induced Her Majesty's Government to propose the measure now submitted to the House. We believe the interests of the revenue will be improved by a system of moderate duties; we believe that the interests of the manufacturers will be consulted by knowing the terms on which they have to deal; and we believe that the interests of those employed will be advanced, if it be possible to cut at this root of smuggling, and if we no longer profess to give a protection which is merely delusive, and which inflicts greater injury on the manufacturers and operatives than any which can be inflicted by fair and honest competition.

MR. DISRAELI: Sir, I shall not detain the House two minutes at this late hour of the night, whilst I briefly reply to one or two observations made by the right hon. Gentleman, in the hope that we may by one more effort induce some hon. Members to enter on the same side with us, and thereby become the advocates for the working classes of this country. The right hon. Gentleman in his peroration has laid the greatest stress upon what the silk trade suffers by means of smuggling, and he has told us of the difficulty that the Government find in checking its increase, so long as the duty of 30 per cent. is continued; and, therefore, Her Majesty's Ministers have resolved upon its reduction. It appears most extraordinary to me that there should be so great a difficulty in preventing smugglers committing this great injury upon the silk trade, when the return for the risk is so very trifling, compared with the incitements that are offered to them for a similar risk in other branches of trade. For instance, they have an induc-

ment of 1,200 per cent. for smuggling tobacco, and 250 per cent. for tea; and in these articles there appears to be no difficulty in suppressing illegal importation—it is only in that of silk that the stress is laid as to the extraordinary power of smuggling. But with regard to the silk trade, I am at a loss to know how the right hon. Gentleman has obtained all his information, unless it has been through that celebrated individual who has lately paid a visit to the Vice-President of the Board of Trade; I mean, Sir, that fortunate trader, Mr. Candy, with whom Her Majesty's Attorney General has lately had an interview, and by an acquaintance with whom the Treasury benches appear to have profited not a little. Now, Sir, the right hon. Gentleman has referred to the state of the silk trade in 1812, and without telling us what it was that led to it, he turned round to us and said, "See what protection has done!" That is very well in its way; but I want to know, was there nothing in the situation of the country to account for all this, except the existence of protection? That was a period of the most disastrous war, when wheat was selling at 120s. a quarter. It was at a period almost as unfortunate for all kinds of trade, as that other period to which the right hon. Gentleman referred; I mean 1816, which has been referred to as the most unfortunate for the mercantile interests of this country. And these are the only reasons that have been brought forward against the irresistible arguments advanced by my noble Friend (Lord G. Bentinck). Is the right hon. Baronet's case so bad that he can only protect himself by having recourse not merely to fallacies of political economy, but to historical fallacies, at once flagrant and contradictory of all experience? Sir, the right hon. Gentleman has also referred to the knubs and husks, which have occupied so much of our attention in the course of this debate; and the right hon. Gentleman has said, what does it signify if it employs labour, and produces that for which there is a great demand, whether the article be of much or little value? I wish to observe—but in the first place I may say, that these knubs and husks are no more to be compared with silk than sheepskin is to be accounted as wool—but taking it for granted, as stated, that as large a quantity as 1,700,000 pounds of the article has been consumed in ten years, I should like to know what is the amount of the advantages which have resulted to the operative classes. To work up 2,000 lbs. a week of that ani-

mal refuse would employ seventy persons; and to work up 2,000 lbs. (the same quantity) of raw silk would employ 800 persons a week. The calculation upon these data—for the correctness of which I believe I may pledge myself—to work up in this country 1,700,000 lbs. of that animal refuse, would occupy for one year 1,200 persons; whilst to work up the same quantity of raw silk in one year would employ 13,600 persons. And now I leave the House to decide upon the comparative value of the two articles of the Tariff; and also which will produce the greatest amount of employment for the people. The right hon. Gentleman, to my great surprise, has attempted to account for the increase in our exports by alleging as a fact, that it has proceeded from the duty having been reduced upon the raw material; whereas the real state of the case is this: the duty on the raw material of silk has been, since the great alteration, 1d. a lb., and the only change that has taken place since was the 5 per cent. addition by the late Government. So it appears that instead of taking off the duty on the raw material, of late years we have actually increased it. I will not trespass one minute longer upon the House, but merely notice one other observation of the right hon. Gentleman. He has asked why the manufacturers have not petitioned? The right hon. Gentleman himself could have supplied the answer: they did not petition, for the same reason that the hon. Gentlemen opposite are at present quiescent about it—because they are satisfied to allow the Corn Law Repeal Bill to pass. But you may rely upon it that the manufacturers of England will soon show that there is a sympathy existing for the agricultural interests; and that this economical blunder will not be allowed to pass over, when the occasion has gone by during which it was necessary to suspend critical observations.

The House divided on the Question that all articles included under the head "Silk Manufactures" stand part of the Resolution:—Ayes 220; Noes 114: Majority 106.

List of the AYES.

Aeland, T. D.	Beckett, W.
A'Court, Capt.	Berkeley, hon. C.
Adderley, C. B.	Berkeley, hon. Capt.
Aglionby, H. A.	Bernal, R.
Ainsworth, P.	Blake, M. J.
Aldam, W.	Blewitt, R. J.
Baillie, H. J.	Bodkin, W. H.
Baine, W.	Botfield, B.
Barkly, H.	Bouverie, hon. E. P.
Baring, rt. hon. F. T.	Bowes, J.
Barnard, E. G.	Bowles, Adm.

Bowring, Dr.	Hastie, A.	Protheroe, E.	Thornely, T.
Bridgeman, H.	Hawes, B.	Pulsford, R.	Towneley, J.
Brotherton, J.	Hayter, W. G.	Rawdon, Col.	Traill, G.
Browne, hon. W.	Heathcoat, J.	Reid, Sir J. R.	Trelawny, J. S.
Bruce, Lord E.	Herbert, rt. hon. S.	Reid, Col.	Trench, Sir F. W.
Buller, C.	Hill, Lord M.	Russell, Lord J.	Tufnell, H.
Busfield, W.	Hindley, C.	Russell, Lord E.	Turner, E.
Cardwell, E.	Hobhouse, rt. hon. Sir J.	Russell, J. D. W.	Vane, Lord H.
Carnegie, hon. Capt.	Hogg, J. W.	Ryder, hon. G. D.	Villiers, hon. C.
Cavendish, hon. G. H.	Holland, R.	Sandon, Visct.	Vivian, J. H.
Chapman, B.	Hope, G. W.	Scrope, G. P.	Vivian, hon. Capt.
Chichester, Lord J. L.	Horsman, E.	Seymour, Lord	Wakley, T.
Childers, J. W.	Howard, hon. C. W. G.	Seymour, Sir H. B.	Walker, R.
Clerk, rt. hon. Sir G.	Howard, hon. E. G. G.	Smith, B.	Wall, C. B.
Cobden, R.	Howard, P. N.	Smith, J. A.	Walpole, Sir H.
Cochrane, A.	Hughes, W. B.	Smith, rt. hon. R. V.	Warburton, H.
Coleburn, rt. hon. Sir G.	Hume, J.	Smythe, hon. G.	Wawn, J. T.
Colebrooke, Sir T. E.	Hutt, W.	Smollett, A.	Wellesley, Lord C.
Collett, J.	James, Sir W. C.	Somerville, Sir W. M.	White, S.
Collins, W.	Jermyn, Earl	Stansfield, W. R. C.	Wood, C.
Corry, rt. hon. H.	Jervis, J.	Staunton, Sir G. T.	Wood, Col. T.
Courtenay, Lord	Jocelyn, Visct.	Stewart, P. M.	Wortley, hon. J. S.
Cowper, hon. W. F.	Johnstone, Sir J.	Stewart, J.	Wyse, T.
Craig, W. G.	Johnstone, H.	Stuart, Lord J.	Yorke, H. R.
Crawford, W. S.	Kelly, Sir F.	Stuart, H.	
Cripps, W.	Labouchere, rt. hon. H.	Strutt, E.	TELLERS.
Curteis, H. B.	Langston, J. H.	Tancrod, H. W.	Young, J.
Dalmeny, Lord	Layard, Capt.	Thesiger, Sir F.	Baring, H.
Dalrymple, Capt.	Legh, G. C.		
Dashwood, G. H.	Loch, J.		
Dawson, hon. T. V.	Lockhart, A. E.		
Dennistoun, J.	Macanlay, rt. hon. T. B.		
Dickinson, F. H.	McCarthy, A.	Acton, Col.	Forbes, W.
Douglas, Sir C. E.	McGeachy, F. A.	Alford, Visct.	Forman, T. S.
Drummond, H. H.	McNeill, D.	Allix, J. P.	Fox, S. L.
Doke, Sir J.	McTaggart, Sir J.	Astell, W.	Frewen, C. H.
Duncan, Visct.	Mnnon, Visct.	Austin, Col.	Fuller, A. E.
Duncan, G.	Mangles, R. D.	Bagot, hon. W.	Gooch, E. S.
Duncannon, Visct.	Marshall, W.	Baillie, W.	Granby, Marquess of
Duncombe, T.	Martin, J.	Balfour, J. M.	Grogan, E.
Dundas, Adm.	Martin, C. W.	Baring, T.	Halford, Sir H.
Easthope, Sir J.	Masterman, J.	Bateson, T.	Hall, Col.
Eastnor, Visct.	Maule, rt. hon. F.	Bell, M.	Harris, hon. Capt.
Ebrington, Visct.	Meynell, Capt.	Benett, J.	Heathcote, G. J.
Egerton, Sir P.	Mitcalfe, H.	Bennet, P.	Henley, J. W.
Ellice, rt. hon. E.	Mitchell, T. A.	Bentinck, Lord G.	Hildyard, T. B. T.
Ellice, E.	Moffatt, G.	Bentinck, Lord H.	Hinde, J. H.
Ellis, W.	Molesworth, Sir W.	Beresford, Major	Hodgson, R.
Elphinstone, H.	Morpeth, Visct.	Blackstone, W. S.	Hope, Sir J.
Escott, B.	Morris, D.	Borthwick, P.	Hope, A.
Etwall, R.	Morison, Gen.	Branston, T. W.	Hudson, G.
Evans, Sir De Lacy	Morrison, J.	Broadley, H.	Hurst, R. H.
Ewart, W.	Mostyn, hon. E. M. L.	Broadwood, H.	Hussey, T.
Feilden, W.	Muntz, G. F.	Brookhurst, J.	Ingestre, Visct.
Ferguson, Col.	Napier, Sir C.	Brooke, Lord	Inglis, Sir H.
Fitzgerald, R. A.	Neville, R.	Bruce, C. L. C.	Irton, S.
Fitzroy, hon. H.	O'Connell, M. J.	Buck, L. W.	Jolliffe, Sir W. G. H.
Fleetwood, Sir P. H.	O'Connell, J.	Cayley, E. S.	Jones, Capt.
Flower, Sir J.	Ord, W.	Christopher, R. A.	Knight, F. W.
Forster, M.	Osborne, R.	Churchill, Lord A. S.	Knightley, Sir C.
Fox, C. R.	Paget, Col.	Clayton, R. R.	Law, hon. C. E.
Gladstone, Capt.	Palmerston, Visct.	Clifton, J. T.	Lawson, A.
Glynne, Sir S. R.	Parker, J.	Colville, C. R.	Lennox, Lord G. H. G.
Gore, M.	Patton, J. W.	Deedes, W.	Leslie, C. P.
Gore, hon. R.	Pechell, Capt.	Disraeli, B.	Lockhart, W.
Goulburn, rt. hon. H.	Peel, rt. hon. Sir R.	Douglas, Sir H.	Manners, Lord J.
Graham, rt. hon. Sir J.	Peel, J.	Duncombe, hon. A.	March, Earl of
Greene, T.	Pennant, hon. Col.	Duncombe, hon. O.	Maunsell, T. P.
Grey, rt. hon. Sir G.	Philipps, G. R.	Du Pre, C. G.	Maxwell, hon. J. P.
Hall, Sir B.	Phillips, M.	Farnham, E. B.	Miles, P. W. S.
Hamilton, W. J.	Phillipotts, J.	Fellowes, E.	Miles, W.
Hamilton, Lord C.	Plumridge, Capt.	Finch, G.	Milnes, R. M.
Hammer, Sir J.	Price, Sir R.	Fitzmaurice, hon. W.	Newport, Visct.
		Floyer, J.	O'Brien, A. S.

List of the NOES.

Forbes, W.
 Forman, T. S.
 Fox, S. L.
 Frewen, C. H.
 Fuller, A. E.
 Gooch, E. S.
 Granby, Marquess of
 Grogan, E.
 Halford, Sir H.
 Hall, Col.
 Harris, hon. Capt.
 Heathcote, G. J.
 Henley, J. W.
 Hildyard, T. B. T.
 Hinde, J. H.
 Hodgson, R.
 Hope, Sir J.
 Hope, A.
 Hudson, G.
 Hurst, R. H.
 Hussey, T.
 Ingestre, Visct.
 Inglis, Sir H.
 Irton, S.
 Jolliffe, Sir W. G. H.
 Jones, Capt.
 Knight, F. W.
 Knightley, Sir C.
 Law, hon. C. E.
 Lawson, A.
 Lennox, Lord G. H. G.
 Leslie, C. P.
 Lockhart, W.
 Manners, Lord J.
 March, Earl of
 Maunsell, T. P.
 Maxwell, hon. J. P.
 Miles, P. W. S.
 Miles, W.
 Milnes, R. M.
 Newport, Visct.
 O'Brien, A. S.

Ossulston, Lord
 Packe, C. W.
 Palmer, R.
 Palmer, G.
 Pigot, Sir R.
 Plumptre, J. P.
 Raableigh, W.
 Rendlesham, Lord
 Repton, G. W. J.
 Richards, R.
 Rolleston, Col.
 Scott, hon. F.
 Seymour, H. K.
 Shaw, rt. hon. F.
 Sibthorp, Col.
 Smyth, Sir H.
 Spooner, R.

Spry, Sir S. T.
 Taylor, E.
 Taylor, J. A.
 Thompson, Ald.
 Tollemache, J.
 Trollope, Sir J.
 Trotter, J.
 Turner, C.
 Tyrell, Sir J. T.
 Waddington, H. S.
 Walsh, Sir J. B.
 Worcester, Marquess of
 Yorke, hon. E. T.

TELLERS.

Bankes, G.
 Newdegate, C. N.

Further proceedings postponed.
 House adjourned at half-past One o'clock.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Tuesday, March 17, 1846.

STATE OF PUBLIC BUSINESS.

MR. A. STAFFORD O'BRIEN, on reading the Order of the Day, wished to say a few words on the present state of Public Business. On the 27th January, the First Lord of the Treasury had announced certain changes, particularly affecting the agricultural interest. The right hon. Baronet had said, that he intended to accompany those changes with provisions which would not exactly give compensation, but which he firmly believed would advance the welfare of that body. It was now the 17th of March, and only one of the measures had been laid on the Table on Friday last, none of the rest had been seen. He did not mean to speak of it as a question of free trade or of protection, but simply as a matter of public business. The right hon. Baronet had stated, among other things, that his opinion had undergone a change; he was understood at the time to refer to the doctrine of protection, not to the mode of conducting the business of the country. If such a course had been pursued by a Government strong in the confidence of its friends, and therefore firm in its tenure of office, there would still be reason to complain; but when the right hon. Baronet must be aware that the class most interested in the change was one which would no longer trust him, even from hour to hour, when he must know, too, that his tenure of office depended solely on the will and pleasure of the noble Lord the Member for London—

the right hon. Baronet could not wonder that after the lapse of seven weeks those who were connected with the land should feel it their duty to come forward and inquire how much longer the suspense was to be continued. How long would it be before the right hon. Baronet introduced the Bills which he said were not to follow, but to accompany, his great commercial measure? What latitude did the right hon. Baronet give to the word "accompany?" Did he understand by it that an opinion might be pronounced upon the principle of one measure before the so-called accompanying measures were even laid upon the Table? In reference to the Law of Settlement Bill, there had yet been no discussion upon it; and in reference to the Drainage Bill, the right hon. Baronet had talked of a period of three years in connexion with the details of it. Whether the sum specified by the right hon. Baronet was to have reference to that Bill, he could not pronounce. His complaint was, that he was utterly without the means of enabling him to judge. Did the right hon. Baronet know whether the agricultural interest was willing or unwilling to accept what he intended to offer? Did he know the average number of acres to be drained? Did he know the average expense of drainage per acre? Or did the right hon. Baronet mean, as he suspected, that it was all to be mere hap-hazard legislation? In the course of seven weeks something more ought to have been known respecting auditors and Poor Law Unions in Ireland. As a Member connected with Ireland, though not an Irish Member, he might add, that the matter did not stop there; the right hon. Baronet had said, that he meant to take the police force out of the hands of the magistracy and give it to the Executive Government. This was to be a boon to the agricultural interest; and the proposal was, to deprive the magistracy of the share they now possess in the control of the police force. The right hon. Baronet had never given the magistrates of Ireland an opportunity to consider whether they would have the measure in reference to the police fund, or in reference to other plans of improvement. This great question of the centralization of the police was connected with the auditors and the Poor Law Unions. It was not his fault, nor that of his friends, that these accompanying measures were not brought forward. The right hon. Baronet had mentioned them all to the House as parts of

his great scheme. The right hon. Baronet said, in terms, that they were only parts of one great scheme; and as one great scheme he had insisted upon its being discussed and adopted. This question was not to be treated as a matter of party, but as a matter of plain straightforward business; and the whole House had a right to claim that the various parts should be considered altogether. He was sorry not to see the right hon. Baronet in his place, and he would have postponed his remarks, if it had not now been twenty minutes to six, when he might reasonably have been expected to be present. But, whether he were in his place or not, Members opposite, as well as those on the Ministerial side of the House, had a right to complain that only one measure of the great scheme had been submitted to it. The right hon. Baronet could not wonder that while the landed interest was charged (not by him, for he was too adroit) with delaying the only Bill upon the Table, they should in return complain that he had committed a double error. He had endeavoured to expedite a measure by joining it with the cry of famine in Ireland. This was one error, and the other was the practical disavowing of the Bill before the House from those measures which were professed to be intended to alleviate and diminish the difficulties of the agriculturists. He (Mr. A. S. O'Brien) did not ask the right hon. Baronet to take another course on the strength of old party attachments; he did not ask it on the score of political friendships; they, alas! no longer existed; but he begged to know from the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much longer the landed interest was to be kept in suspense? Whether any other measures, parts of the great scheme, were to be brought forward before Easter, so that the House might have an opportunity of pronouncing an opinion upon them before it decided finally on the measure which would expose the land to foreign competition? Of course any Member of the Government would be able to answer him, and to give him clear, definite, and distinct information. If nobody chose to answer him, but left the matter unexplained, injury would not be done to the protectionist party, but to Ministers, in the opinion of all reasonable judges and men of sound understanding.

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said, that he was sorry to have to apologize to the House for the absence of

his right hon. Friend the First Lord of the Treasury. He could assure the House, and from the constancy of his right hon. Friend's attendance they would readily credit the assurance, that nothing but the public business had prevented him being in his place at the usual hour. He certainly wished that the hon. Member had availed himself of some opportunity, during the seven weeks which he stated had elapsed since the measures of the Government were propounded to the House, to have asked this question as to the mode of transacting the public business, when the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government was present. In bringing forward the measures now before the House, his right hon. Friend had entered into considerable detail as to the various measures he intended to submit to Parliament during the present Session, in connexion with those measures for the reduction of duties now under consideration; and in the discussion that then took place, the great anxiety expressed was to have a knowledge of the details of the Bill which related to settlements. That Bill had accordingly been presented to the House, and was now in the hands of every Member. The Bills relating to the highways and to drainage were at present in a considerably advanced state of preparation. The substance and object of those Bills had been distinctly stated; and it was impossible for any one who wished to form a judgment on the bearings and tendency of those measures not to be able to do so from the statements already made. With respect to the other grants that were proposed to be made in aid of the costs of prosecutions, the maintenance of prisoners, and the payment of salaries connected with the Poor Law Unions, the hon. Gentleman was just as able now to form a calculation of the amount of that expense, as he would be when the vote was propounded to the House in Committee of Supply; and until they should have a Committee of Supply, those votes would not be brought before the House. He was certainly not unacquainted with those votes, which would be laid upon the Table with the other estimates; but any Gentleman conversant with the details under those heads, would have no difficulty in forming an accurate calculation of the sum which would be required under the several heads that had been adverted to. He should certainly be most happy, if the mode in which public business was conducted, were such as to admit of a greater number of measures being si-

multaneously proceeded with; but he had had experience enough in Parliamentary life to know that the business of the House could only be transacted satisfactorily, by having their attention continuously directed to the particular objects that were from time to time submitted to the House, and finishing, or at least considerably advancing, the consideration of one, before they entered on that of another. From the Law of Settlement Bill which had been brought in, hon. Gentlemen would have the opportunity of judging of the bearing it ought to have upon the vote which they would give on other questions. The measures with respect to highways and drainage were in a state of preparation. Had he had notice of the question to be asked, he might have been able to state more exactly the period when they would be brought before the House; at present he could not do so; but it was not from any desire to withhold from the House any detail or information which was necessary to enable them to form an opinion on the other measures. He was extremely sorry the question had been put at this time, in the absence of those more particularly connected with the measures; he feared his answer might not have been quite satisfactory. All he could say was, that there was no indisposition on the part of the Government to make known to the House in the fullest detail all that was necessary for the guidance of their judgment; but in the conduct of business it was impossible to bring a variety of matters at the same time under their consideration.

CUSTOMS AND CORN IMPORTATION REPORT.

MR. CAYLEY said, that before the article of Silk was disposed of, if physically capable—the hon. Member on this allusion to his prolonged state of ill health, was cheered by all sides of the House—he was desirous of offering a few observations to the House.

MR. SPEAKER was understood to say that the article of Silk was not then before the House. The next article to be reported was Silk-worm Gut.

MR. CAYLEY then said, that he would move that those words be omitted, for the purpose of addressing the House upon the present occasion. It had been stated, that the trade was generally in favour of a reduction of the duties on silk. Now he supposed that the trade consisted of the masters and of the workmen; at least if

the latter were not esteemed, by the advocates of free trade, unworthy of being considered as a part of the trade. Presuming, then, that the trade consisted of masters and their workmen, was it not clear, from what had passed both here and out of doors, that the silk trade was entirely opposed to the reductions in duties proposed by Her Majesty's Government? No silk manufacturer in that House had spoken favourably of the new Tariff; only one of that body had spoken, but his sentiments were uttered in terms not to be misunderstood; and they were, that every step taken towards free trade, so far as respected the silk trade, had been accompanied by ruin to the master, and distress to the workman. He alluded to the speech of his hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Broeklehurst), the largest silk manufacturer in this kingdom, perhaps in the world. If this was the opinion of the masters, what was the opinion of the silk weavers? Were the working classes so favourable as had been so confidently asserted, to free trade, and to the delusive vision of a cheap loaf? He believed that the working classes, whenever they had had the question of free trade fairly and honestly submitted to them, had come to the conclusion that wages and employment were of infinitely greater importance to them, than the question of the Corn Laws. They believed that protection to native industry ensured to them employment—that employment ensured wages—and wages ensured bread. Certainly the silk weavers, at various public meetings held since these debates began, had expressed this as their opinion, that protection to native industry was essential to the welfare of the working classes of this country. A public meeting was first held in Spitalfields against the reductions in duties proposed by the Government. This was no ticket meeting, where contrary opinions were put down by force or the police. It was a free, open, public meeting, where free discussion was invited and allowed. Resolutions against any further reductions in the protection to the silk manufacturer, were carried by a majority of about twenty to one. Another public meeting of weavers, free and open to all, was held at Leigh, near Manchester; another meeting, of the same description, had been held at Middleton, near Manchester; another at Manchester itself; another at Derby; another at Chowbent; another of these open public meetings was

held at Ormskirk. At the latter place a free trader had occupied the chair of the meeting; and such had been the conviction produced by the speeches of those in favour of protection to the silk trade, that the chairman and his free-trade adherents had been converted, and had passed over to the side of protection. Several other meetings, at eight or nine different places, had been held, and at every one of them resolutions had been passed, opposed to the measure of the Government. He (Mr. Cayley) had been chairman of the Handloom Weavers' Committee in 1834, (in the absence of his excellent friend Sir John Maxwell, who to his honour had always been so energetic in behalf of the weavers,) and he had since then enjoyed, as he considered fortunately, very frequent opportunities of communication with them; and their opinion was, that the alterations which had taken place in the duties affecting their manufacture had been most disastrous to their trade, and they were prepared to meet the present measure with every opposition—an opposition not, perhaps, much attended to by the advocates of unlimited competition, but still, he hoped, that if they could not alter the determination of Parliament, or prevent these resolutions from passing, the Government would be inclined to pay some attention to the prayers of these poor operatives who surely ought to be allowed to understand something of their own interests. He knew, indeed, from his own experience, that Governments were in the habit of paying attention much more to some favourite dogma of economy, when representations of distress were made to them, than to the real facts of the case. The right hon. Gentleman, the Vice-President of the Board of Trade, had spoken last night exactly in a similar strain. "I should be at a loss (said the right hon. Member) where to go to look for evidence of distress in the silk trade." No doubt he would, according to his practice, and that of his school. For what was that practice? Why, when distress was alluded to, he would probably pull down some philosophical volume out of the shelves of the Board of Trade, and would turn to the index to find the word distress; and opening the page would see that distress, according to the notion of the philosophical writer did not exist, or if it did exist, it ought not to exist according to some abstract theory. And so the poor workmen were left to their fate, just as the farmers

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have always been when their distress was complained of. The right hon. Gentleman and his school are learned in every book, but the great book of life. If, instead of turning to his favourite author, he had looked out of his window; and still more, if he had gone and visited the wretched habitations of the Spitalfields weavers, where comfort once existed, and plenty once smiled, before his party began their free-trade experiments in the silk trade, he would not only have found facts to prove deterioration and distress much more to be relied on than any columns of figures, but he would have found a commentary on the doctrines of unrestricted competition, written in letters of so significant and indelible a character as might have instructed the head, if it had not softened the heart, of a political economist. Sir, (continued the hon. Gentleman, with energy,) I do earnestly entreat the Government to pause, before they pass these resolutions, which must produce the most disastrous effects. I would, if my strength permitted me, notice some of the erroneous statements which were made on the subject in our recent discussions. It is not want of matter, but want of strength that now makes me desist. Allusions, however, have been made to the conduct of landowners, as if their private interests actuated them in their votes on these questions. Sir, the landlords of this country are not a mercenary body; they know that the land and the labour of England must sink or swim together; they know that their interests are bound up with the interests of the majority of their countrymen; their greatest pride, and pleasure, and anxiety, are to see their tenants and labourers flourish around them. They have especially deeply at heart the welfare and happy condition of the working classes. The feeling they have for the labourers more immediately about them, they willingly, cheerfully, cordially extend to every portion of the working community of their country. Do what you will with the land—ruin many thousands of honest farmers I fear you are determined to do—do what you will with the landlords—it is not for them I am now speaking—and they cannot be the principal sufferers from the disasters you are now entailing—do what you will with the landlords—but for the sake of the working classes, for whom I now speak, and whose affections we must all be desirous to cultivate—for their sake, I earnestly implore you not to carry these

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resolutions to reduce the silk duties into a law. Most earnestly I entreat you not to inflict this deadly injury, this blow at their employment, on a body of men whose daily—nay, whose hourly subsistence depends on the wages and the employment they receive.

DR. BOWRING said, he had for years watched the progress of feeling amongst the working classes, and he could assure the hon. Member for Yorkshire that there was a very great improvement amongst them. The working classes of this country, as well as of foreign nations, were becoming aware of the degree of suffering which what was called protection inflicted upon them. Of this consciousness a remarkable instance was afforded by a memorial, addressed by the working classes of the city of Lyons to the Chamber of Deputies, in which they stated that they were poor, and were deemed ignorant; but that their poverty and ignorance did not prevent them from ascertaining that the labouring classes were deeply interested in the extension of their market. They were aware that protection, so far from being a benefit to them, was their bane. The English manufacturers desired it no longer, and the French repudiated it altogether. In consequence of the attention called to the superiority of French designs, owing to the greater encouragement given to that branch of art in France than in this country, and the immense disproportion of artists consequently employed—the numbers in France being as 100 to 1 in this country—the emulation of the English designer had been excited, and the result was that the disparity between French and English patterns was fast passing away. At this moment English silks were admitted into France at 12 per cent., while upon French silks imported into this country a duty of 30 per cent. was charged, and, in consequence of the manner in which it was levied, the exaction amounted in fact to 60 and 70 per cent. He was sure the removal of restrictions upon the intercourse between the two countries could do nothing but good to both.

MR. C. BULLER just asked to recall to the recollection of the House that the question of silk had passed, and that the article they were now upon was that of silk-worm gut, something used, he believed, in fishing.

MR. BORTHWICK said, the hon. and learned Gentleman was exceedingly kind in his admonition, but it should have been

directed to his own side of the House; for it was evident, from what had passed that night, that the Government and their supporters on the opposite side were determined to protract the discussion as long as possible. The hon. Member for Yorkshire had made a speech which had done equal credit to himself, to his class, to the House, and to the country. And then the Member for Bolton (Dr. Bowring) had followed with a speech to the effect that the working people, not of England, but of France, were in favour of the measure. Now it was most likely, as the people of France were our rivals in the silk among other manufactures, that their feelings on the subject would be quite at variance with those entertained by the people of this country. Let it be recollected that the people of France had not established the peace of the world at a cost of 600,000,000*l.*, as the people of England had done, and that our industry had now to bear the burden of that cost, involving, as it did, the greater part of the annual taxation of 54,000,000*l.* The greatness of France depended almost entirely on her domestic industry; whereas that of England rested principally on the prosperity of her Colonies, within the range of which the productions of every climate and of every soil could be procured; so that her Legislature might, with perfect safety, extend the principle of protection over all her Colonies, embracing above 200,000,000 of inhabitants, and yet might obtain, within her own empire, the most ample supply of every commodity. The moderate protection contended for on behalf of native industry was not, therefore, in the case of England, at all inconsistent with perfect and unrestricted interchange of all the commodities that entered into the commerce or the consumption of a great nation. He deprecated the idea that the advocates of such protection, in opposing the present measure, were resisting free trade, properly so called, but the opposite of free trade. Free trade implied the unshackled exchange of the commodities of one country for those of all others on equal terms; but how could that be obtained in the absence of protective duties on behalf of the productions of a country the taxation of which was so disproportioned to any burdens which foreign nations had to bear? Let free trade be fairly and intelligibly advocated, or let there be moderate protection. But in a measure like the present there was a mixture of all things, and the asser-

tion of nothing—there was “confusion worse confounded”—there was the absence of beginning, of middle, and of end—there was that which unsettled everything to settle nothing—that which inflicted all the evils of change on the nation without any accompanying amelioration or advantage.

MR. MUNTZ adverted to the manufacture of zinc, which he said had been utterly extinguished by the free-trade measure, and nearly a million of capital had been thus displaced. It was utterly impossible that in the manufacture of this metal we could compete with the foreigner without protection. He said this disinterestedly, for he should, nevertheless, vote for the repeal of all protective duties, that all interests might at least be on the same footing.

The item was then allowed to pass.

Question agreed to.

On the Question that Spirits and Strong Waters, of all sorts, 15s. the gallon, stand part of the Resolution,

MR. ALDERMAN THOMPSON said, this head included the article of French brandy, &c., a most important item in respect to considerations of revenue; for the duty on foreign spirits, derived principally from Cognac brandy, amounted to nearly 1,200,000*l.* a year. The duty at present was 22*s.* 10*d.* a gallon. It was now proposed to reduce it to 15*s.*, by taking off 7*s.* 10*d.*, or nearly one-third, which would reduce the revenue derived therefrom by at least 400,000*l.* Now he was not at all aware of the reason upon which it was proposed to abandon so large a portion of the revenue derived from this source. It could not surely be said that the object was to increase the consumption of spirits; for such an object would scarcely be avowed by any Government, and would not be reconcilable with any regard for the welfare of the people, either as respected their moral or physical condition. Moreover, if any such object were entertained, it could not be attained by any such means, because the price of the article must always confine the consumption to the middling classes. It might be said the object was to prevent smuggling, and a great deal had been said during these discussions upon that point. But how did the case stand as to brandies? Why, at the reduced rate of duty, the bonus it would afford to the smuggler would be 300 per cent.; for a duty of 15*s.* per gallon was to be placed on an article, of which

the prime cost was only 5*s.* per gallon. Further, the brandy trade was a complete monopoly. Cognac was the only description of brandy brought into home consumption to any great extent; and the import of that article was confined to some six or seven houses. Some brandy came from Bourdeaux and other places, but of very inferior quality; and all the best came from Cognac. Now, it was a striking fact, that in December last the price of this sort of Cognac was 85 francs per gallon, and it was now 120 francs. That was of the vintage of 1844; while the price of the vintage of 1845 (there being the two vintages now in the course of shipment) was in December last 95 francs, and now it was 130 francs per gallon. Little benefit, if any, then, it was obvious, could result to the consumer from the great loss of revenue now proposed upon this article. Nor was it possible to increase the supply of Cognac much beyond its present extent. It might be said, perhaps, that one object was to induce the French Government to show a more liberal spirit of commercial intercourse. His answer to that was, by inquiring what had resulted from the equalization of the duties on French wines and fruits? No benefit to the revenue—no benefit to the commerce of the country. On the contrary, in a short period after that, the French Government imposed heavy duties on our cotton twist, amounting almost to a prohibition, the only consequence of our measure in favour of French wines and fruits being, that we lost the trade with Portugal in a great degree; for the latter State, on finding French wines put on a level with Portuguese, raised the duties on our goods from 5 or 15 per cent. to 15 or 30 per cent. He deeply regretted that on this occasion the Government had departed from the usual established custom; that the Budget should be produced before any great financial measures were agreed to. They were at present really discussing matters in the dark. No one knew the probable amount of the surplus of revenue (if any) over expenditure; and it was impossible that the House, until put in possession of the ordinary information on that subject, should be in a position duly to adjust the claims of different duties for remission or repeal. Much had been said recently as to the comforts and the welfare of the working classes; which he should conceive would be more promoted by a reduction of the duty on soap, than by the proposed reduction on brandies, &c.

Under these circumstances, and in the absence of explanation or information, he should move the omission of these words from the Schedule.

MR. EWART expressed himself in favour of any measure tending to extend the commerce of this country with France. He was in favour of a much greater reduction in the duty on wine than any that had as yet taken place; for, from the time of Mr. Pitt's first experiment, by which one half of the duty was struck off, to the present day, every year's experience tended to show how beneficial were the results which followed from the relaxation of the protective system. He was sure that the hon. Gentlemen who professed themselves to be friends of protection, were friends also of peace; and he considered that it was not the least important of the many blessings which he was sure would flow from the Ministerial project for the alteration of our commercial policy, that it was likely to have the effect of increasing the means of international commerce between this country and France and America, and of creating in these and all other countries with which we were connected, a feeling of attachment to peace, and an anxiety that all nations should be bound together in the bonds of friendship and concord.

THE MARQUESS OF GRANBY said, that there was nothing which gave so much encouragement to crime as drink. A work upon the subject, which he held in his hand, stated that in Scotland at least four-fifths of the crime committed in that country had originated in the effects of drink. He really thought the Government should not reduce still further the duties on foreign spirits. He felt at a loss to know upon what arguments this measure would be carried. He thought it was clear that if the duties were reduced from 22s. to 15s. there would be a considerable increase in the consumption of spirits in this country, and, therefore, they ought to be very careful how they reduced the duty upon foreign spirits. He should oppose the measure, because he thought it was a question of the great principle of protection to British industry; and it might be taken even in a higher and more exalted sense, for it not only affected protection to British industry, but also protection to the sobriety of the lower orders. He sincerely hoped that on this occasion humanity and reason would triumph over a most pernicious and most unnatural coalition.

MR. CARDWELL said, that, looking

at the question as one of revenue, experience had shown that they could not double the amount paid into the Exchequer by doubling the amount of duty. There were historical authorities to justify a conclusion as to the probable result of a diminution of the duty on spirits. Was the hon. Member for Westmoreland (Mr. Alderman Thompson) aware that, by a Return which was presented to Parliament in the last Session, and which had been circulated amongst the Members, it appeared that the ordinary consumption of French brandy in this country at the close of the last century was, notwithstanding the enormous increase of our population, and the still greater increase of our wealth, actually more than the quantity which was now upon an average retained for the home consumption? The hon. Gentleman said that the proposed alteration of the duty would not prevent smuggling; but practical authorities had come to quite a different conclusion. The Commissioners who were formerly appointed to consider the state of the revenue with regard to the excise duty upon spirits in Ireland and Scotland, stated in their Report, that in 1811, when the duty on spirits was 2s. 6d. a gallon, duty was paid in Ireland on 6,500,000 gallons; whereas, in 1822, when the duty was 5s. 6d., less than 3,000,000 gallons were brought to charge; but the Commissioners estimated that at the latter period the annual consumption was not less than 10,000,000 gallons; and, as scarcely 3,000,000 paid duty, it followed that 7,000,000 were irregularly supplied. And the Commissioners predicted that, if the duty were reduced, there would be an increase in the quantity that was charged, and an increase in the revenue. Was this prediction verified? In 1822 the actual quantity brought to charge was 2,900,000 gallons, and the revenue amounted to 800,000*l.*; whilst in 1825, after the duty was again reduced, the quantity brought to charge was 9,262,000 gallons, and the revenue was 1,107,000*l.* The returns with respect to Scotland showed just the same results. Where they had subtracted from the duty they had increased the revenue; and he contended that, though this had been done, no harm had ensued to the morals of the population; for they had not thereby increased the quantity consumed, but had put down the greater evils connected with the system of illicit distillation. The quantity of spirits was not augmented, but the profits of those who lived

by the evasion of the law were diminished, and the amount of revenue brought into the Exchequer was increased; therefore, neither upon the ground taken by the hon. Member for Westmoreland, that the revenue would be affected, nor that other ground taken by the noble Marquess—namely, that of the public morality, could the present exorbitant rate of duty be maintained. The hon. Member for Westmoreland also argued that we had gained nothing by any former remission or reduction of duties on French produce; but he asked if anything could be more satisfactory than the results shown by the Returns made with reference to the trade between this country and France? He certainly did not say that the trade was what it ought to be between two such great empires; but if the hon. Gentleman would look at the Returns, he would see that there had been an invariable increase year by year.

MR. KNIGHT said, that the maker of British brandy would be contented to go on, even with reduced profits, if so great a burden as the excise duties were not placed on him; but at the present time it could not be said that British brandy was an article gaining ground in England. The excise laws also prevented this trade from extending further than our own country. If English traders had the opportunity of exporting, they might then very possibly be in a condition to compete with foreigners; and there was no doubt they would certainly try to do so. He most sincerely wished that the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had made an attack, with the same good will, upon the excise laws, which were most oppressive to the English manufacturer, as he had on the protective duties. He should certainly divide against the measure. The House divided:—Ayes 64; Noes 35: Majority 29.

List of the AYES.

Aeland, T. D.	Cockburn, rt. hn. Sir G.
Aldam, W.	Corry, rt. hon. H.
Baillie, H. J.	Dickinson, F. H.
Baine, W.	Douglas, Sir C. E.
Barelay, D.	Duke, Sir J.
Barnard, E. G.	Duncan, G.
Blewitt, H. J.	Escentt, B.
Botfield, B.	Ewart, W.
Bright, J.	Fitzroy, hon. H.
Browne, hon. W.	Goulburn, rt. hon. H.
Butler, hon. Col.	Graham, rt. hon. Sir J.
Cardwell, E.	Hanmer, Sir J.
Carnegie, hon. Capt.	Herbert, rt. hon. S.
Clerk, rt. hon. Sir G.	Hope, G. W.
Cochrane, A.	Howard, hon. C. W. G.

Howard, P. H.
Humphery, Ald.
Kelly, Sir F.
Kirk, P.
Langston, J. H.
McGeachy, F. A.
Mahon, Visct.
Masterman, J.
Mitchell, T. A.
Mostyn, hon. E. M. L.
Muntz, G. F.
Neville, R.
O'Brien, J.
Osborne, R. B.
Peehell, Capt.
Peel, rt. hon. Sir R.
Peel, J.
Plumridge, Capt.
Price, Sir R.

Somers, J. P.
Tancred, H. W.
Thesiger, Sir F.
Thornley, T.
Tollemache, hon. F. J.
Trelawny, J. S.
Trench, Sir F. W.
Tufnell, H.
Turner, E.
Villiers, hon. C.
Warburton, H.
Wawn, J. T.
White, S.
Wortley, hon. J. S.
York, H. R.

TELLERS.

Young, J.
Cripps, T.

List of the NOES.

Allix, J. P.	Knight, F. W.
Arbuthnot, hon. H.	Knightley, Sir C.
Astell, W.	Lawson, A.
Benett, J.	Lennox, Lord G. H. G.
Bennet, P.	Liddell, hon. H. T.
Bentinek, Lord G.	Mackenzie, T.
Beresford, Major	March, Earl of
Buck, L. W.	Miles, W.
Cayley, E. S.	Newdegate, C. N.
Colville, C. R.	Palmer, G.
Compton, H. C.	Plumptre, J. P.
Disraeli, B.	Sheppard, T.
Finch, G.	Sibthorp, Col.
Floyer, J.	Trollope, Sir J.
Frewen, C. H.	Tyrell, Sir J. T.
Fuller, A. E.	Worcester, Marq. of
Goring, C.	
Halford, Sir H.	TELLERS.
Hinde, J. H.	Granby, Marq. of
	Thompson, Ald.

Upon the article Clover,

MR. ALLIX would request the indulgence of the House whilst he stated some reasons for requesting the Vice-President of the Board of Trade not to take off the duty of 10s. upon clover. He stood up in behalf of the poor labourers, who were greatly interested in the maintenance of the duty. During a great part of the year he attended a Poor Law meeting once a week, and there it was considered that the growth of clover, and the employment which it afforded, was most essential to the welfare of the labourers of the district; for in the winter months, when other kinds of employment were scarce, it afforded them occupation in preparing the clover for market. He hoped the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for the Home Department would take this into consideration, and allow the 10s. duty which they now possessed to remain. It should not be forgotten, that it was the 50l. tenantry that placed the Government where they were; although it would seem by the measures of Govern-

ment that they wished to sweep them off the face of the earth. Did they really wish to ruin the gentry of England—to upset the aristocracy, and to shake the monarchy to its very foundation—and did the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department, who was bound by the act of the Government, wish for such a consummation? He felt strongly on this subject, and could not help expressing his opinion. He was aware the right hon. Baronet was omnipotent for good or for evil; he had a strong body of new supporters; he would not, therefore, divide the House. He only asked them to pause a little before they injured the poor helpless labourer, who was defenceless against their legislation. He did not often trouble the House: nothing but an imperative sense of duty actuated him when he did so. He had been speaking to some Scotch gentlemen on the subject, and they were as averse as he was to diminishing the means of employing the poor, and lessening the wages of their labour.

SIR R. PEEL: I assure my hon. Friend, and I have known him for a very long period, that I give him entire credit for sincerity of feeling: there is not a more independent, honourable man in the House—but at the same time, I must say, that I think my hon. Friend carries his attachment to the duty on clover exceedingly far, when he makes a duty of 10s. per cwt. on clover the foundation of maintaining the 50l. tenantry of England, when he rests upon it the maintenance of the privileges of the aristocracy, and makes even the dignity and existence of the monarchy depend upon this protective duty of 10s. per cwt. This is carrying the doctrine of protection further than I have yet heard it carried. But how does this duty of 10s. really help the agriculturists? It only applies to a very small district of England comparatively speaking, in which clover seed is ripened, and then to the producer only, whilst the consumers everywhere would be benefited by the remission of duty. I will venture to say, that even amongst the 50l. tenantry, about which my hon. Friend has spoken, that for the one that would be injured by the proposed change of duty, a hundred would be benefited. I believe there is no one class will be more benefited by the diminution of this duty, than those very 50l. tenantry. I have received urgent remonstrances from England

and Scotland against the maintenance of the duty. Cloverseed is not grown where it is most needed, and where science is most applied and most essential to the promotion of agriculture.

Mr. ALLIX wished to explain. He had not said that the diminution of duty on clover would sweep away the 50l. tenantry, or shake the foundations of the monarchy. What he said was, that the measures of the Government would have that effect.

The article was agreed to.

On the fifth, relating to Oxen, Bulls, Asses, Swine, &c.,

Mr. W. MILES was very sorry the Government thought fit to reduce the duty on oxen, sheep, and other animals. He thought the duty had worked exceedingly well, and in the very few observations he would address to the House, he would bring forward first of all the supply which had come from foreign countries since the duty had been imposed, and since the prohibition ended, in order to show that the importation had increased since 1842, and that it now amounted to a large quantity. At the same time, he would show that the present duty had not in any way had the effect of preventing animals being brought from abroad into our markets, so that they could not remove the duty on the plea that it was prohibitory, nor because it was unproductive to the revenue; for though such importation in the first year was but small, and though the revenue derived was consequently trifling, yet they must have observed that both were yearly increasing, and this year they were something considerable. It ought not to be forgotten, that when the Tariff of 1842 passed, foreign countries could not have been apprized of the intention of this Government to propose such a measure, and consequently had only a supply of cattle to meet the existing demand. Cattle could not, like corn or manufactures, be produced for the market in a single year; they were the growth of some years, and the foreigner had doubtless taken his measures to stock our markets. For his part, he saw no reason why the farmers' cattle should not be protected by a duty of 10 per cent., as well as the manufacturers. Those individuals who had been placed in power by the agricultural class seemed to overlook their interests, and to treat them less favourably than they did other classes of the community. The present duty was 1l. on oxen, 15s. on cows, 10s. on calves, 3s. on sheep,

2s. on lambs, 5s. on pigs, 2s. on sucking pigs. Now this was, if not a very considerable amount of duty, at least a very useful protection; but this they were about to abolish. He was not, and had not been, in favour of a prohibitory duty—he would not totally exclude foreign animals. He had brought forward a Resolution that the duty on foreign cattle should be computed by the cwt., and, in doing so, had entered into the cost of feeding cattle on the Continent, as compared with that in England. He would not now go into details, but would simply call the attention of the House to Mr. Meek's evidence, which might be relied upon, as he had been appointed for the purpose of making Returns. He would quote from these documents the cost of animals coming from very different foreign parts, the freight, duty, and other charges. Six cwt. was the estimate of each fat ox imported. Now, taking an ox of six cwt. in this country, and computing it at 6d. per lb., the cost of the beast would be 16l. 16s. During former discussions, he ought to observe, that one country had been put out of sight altogether—he meant Spain. They thought nothing would come thence, the voyage was so distant; but as he then said, so it had turned out, that they had, and would have, a large supply from that country. It had been stated, that there was a falling-off generally in the supply of cattle from the foreign markets; but was it not plain that foreigners were only waiting for the removal of this duty of 1l., so that their profits might be larger? Mr. Meek had mentioned seven ports, and in the following table stated the price at which the cattle brought from them could be sold here, including freight and other charges.

PORTS.	PRICE.			DUTY.		
	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
Kiel	11	0	6	1	0	0
Lubeck	15	2	6	1	0	0
Rostock	15	17	6	1	0	0
Dantzio	13	14	6	1	0	0
Elsinore	12	2	6	1	0	0
Ostend	15	5	6	1	0	0
Hamburg	15	13	0	1	0	0

Taking the average of the price from these seven ports, they would find that, duty free, cattle of six cwt. could be sold in this country at 13l. 3s. 6d. a head. He had already stated that the same animal was sold in the home market for 16l. 16s., and therefore it would make a difference of 3l. 12s. 6d. to the farmer. The amount

of cattle imported from foreign countries for the year ending the 5th of January, 1844, was as follows:—

Oxen and bulls	1,114
Cows	368
Calves	39
Sheep	210
Lambs	7
Swine and hogs	361

2,090

Then commenced the increase of importation, which, as in the case of Ireland, had been steady and continuous. In the year ending January 5, 1845, they would find the numbers imported to be as follows:—

Oxen and bulls	3,710
Cows	1,155
Calves	55
Sheep	2,801
Lambs	16
Swine and hogs	27

7,764

And for the year ending January 5, 1846, the numbers were—

Oxen and bulls	9,782
Cows	6,502
Calves	586
Sheep	15,846
Lambs	112
Swine and hogs	1,591

34,410

The increase of the year ending 5th of January 1846, as compared with that ending 5th of January, 1844, would be found to be:—

On Oxen between 8 and 0 to 1	
Cows between 17 and 18 —	
Calves	15 —
Sheep	75 —
Lambs	16 —
Swine and hogs between 4 and 5 to 1	

He held in his hand an extract from a letter from a mercantile firm in New York, the house of Messrs. Lawrie and Co., which he would read to the House. It was dated January 30, 1846, and ran thus:—

“Superior flour suitable for the English market 5½ dols. to 5 dols. 62½ per barrel. Freight to Liverpool 2s., to London 4s. Large quantities of the best beef are now being packed in this country in tierces, cut in the proper sized pieces for the English market. This export is greatly on the increase. The farmers are finding out the mode of making such cheese as suits the English market, and the shipments will be very large this year. Notwithstanding all the noise which they make at Washington respecting Oregon, they have not the slightest intention of going to war about it.”

It was evident that an increase in cattle might be expected from America; they were fast adapting themselves to supply the wants of the European markets. [Mr.

ESCOTT: Hear!] The hon. Member might cheer, and he would say there might be some reason for the cheer, if Ireland and Scotland were unable, with the English farmer, to supply their markets; but surely, if they would not consider the case of the English agriculturists, they ought to take into account the people of Scotland and of Ireland, in which agriculture was the only thing that flourished, and upon which the great bulk of the population depended for support. The number of animals imported from Ireland, in the quarter ending January 5, 1846, was as follows:—

Oxen bulls and cows	32,883
Calves	583
Sheep and lambs	32,576
Swine	104,141
	170,183

He had no doubt but some Gentlemen from Scotland would address the House on this matter, and he (Mr. Miles) would not anticipate their remarks. The Scotch cattle, it should be observed, from the length of the journey, were much depreciated in value when they reached the English market. On the whole, he could see no reason why the duty should not remain upon cattle, at least as long as it would remain upon corn; nor could he perceive why they wished to remove the protective duty from raw home produce, and expose it to the competition of the world, whilst they allowed a protective duty to remain upon manufactures in which it was admitted we excelled. He did not intend to take more than one division on this matter, and would therefore move, that oxen, cows, calves, sheep, lambs, swine and hogs, bacon, beef, fresh or slightly salted, beef salted not being corned beef, meat salted or fresh and otherwise described, pork fresh and pork salted (not hams), be omitted from the Resolution.

COLONEL SIBTHORP seconded the Amendment. The right hon. Baronet seemed determined to pursue the same headlong course, reckless of consequences, and to disregard entirely the interests of those who placed him on the bench where he then sat. The farmers were, after all, not so much disappointed as disgusted at the conduct of the right hon. Baronet, for they did not expect consistency from him. The farmers, in common with most people, wished that the reign of the right hon. Baronet might be very short, and felt some consolation that it must, at all events, be terminated at the next general election.

The right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) asked him to accept the Chiltern Hundreds; but he disdained being the nominee of Government, and told him so. Since then, now he had the happiness to inform the right hon. Baronet, he had received a letter from his constituents, in which they expressed regret that he had not accepted the Chiltern Hundreds. [*Laughter.*] Let not hon. Gentlemen laugh till they had heard the whole of the sentence—"so that they might have an opportunity of electing him free of expense." He should, he knew, get a reception very different from that which the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Escott) might expect, because he had not rattled to the Treasury benches. They might as well attempt to take blood out of a milestone as to obtain concessions from the right hon. Baronet. He hoped that the period was not far distant when Englishmen would have an opportunity of showing what they thought of the conduct of Government in this matter. There seemed to be some probability of war, and if so, he should like to know how their navy was to be victualled. Though they might be vanquished in point of numerical strength, he thought they had the best of the argument. At all events he had felt it his duty to come down every night, and, if necessary, to record his vote against the destructive measures of the Government. The right hon. Baronet would eventually find, as he had already told him, that he was sitting between two stools, between which himself and his Administration must soon fall to the ground.

MR. PHILIP HOWARD wished to suggest to his right hon. Friend the Vice-President of the Board of Trade, whether it would not be advisable to impose a small registration duty on the importation of foreign cattle; not for any purpose of revenue, farther than paying the amount of the Custom-house charges, but as a means of having a correct account of the number imported. He was himself favourable to the free importation of cattle from abroad; because, as they were generally brought over in a lean condition, the English farmer would have a part of the profits arising from fattening them fit for the London market.

SIR ROBERT PEELE said, after listening to the speech of the hon. Member for Somersetshire with all the attention which was due to the station filled by the hon. Gentleman, and to the great attention which he had paid to this subject, he must

confess he felt surprised that the hon. Gentleman had not admitted that some of the statements which he had made were calculated to diminish the alarm which he alleged existed as the consequence of the withdrawal of the import duty, not only on foreign cattle, but also on other articles of agricultural produce. The hon. Member had stated this remarkable fact in the course of his speech, that in a single quarter of a year there had been no less than 171,000 animals, including oxen, bulls, cows, and sheep, imported from Ireland into this country. In that short period there had been no less than 171,000 animals entering into competition with the graziers of this country from Ireland; while within the last three years there had not been brought in, under the reduced duty, from foreign countries, more than 140,000 oxen. But surely, if the great importation on one side, as stated by the hon. Gentleman, did not affect the price of meat in the English market, the comparatively trifling importation from foreign countries could not have that effect. He held in his hand a comparison of the Government contracts for fresh and salt meat in the home market from the year 1836 to 1845, and notwithstanding this enormous importation from Ireland, and the importation from foreign countries during the last three years, what were the results which it showed? Why, that in 1843 the price of fresh beef per cwt. was 1*l.* 18*s.* 4*d.*, while in 1845 the price was 2*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.* In salt beef the contract price per tierce of 304 lbs. was 3*l.* 18*s.* 5*d.* in 1843; and he was very sorry to say, no less than 6*l.* 8*s.* 8*d.* in 1845. Again, in the article of salt pork, in the face of the Irish import, and of all the importation which three years ago was threatened to come from the provinces of the Mississippi, when a calculation was entered into to show that 100 sows would produce, in the course of a number of years, no less than 232,000,000 of pigs; which was one of the demonstrations of the hon. Gentleman on that occasion: in opposing the change in the Tariff in 1842, it was proved, greatly to the alarm of every holder of a pig in this country, that in the course of five or ten years 100 sows would produce the enormous number of 232,000,000 of pigs; which were—to use the phrase of the hon. Gentleman—to inundate the markets of this country. Now, in place of the Irish import, and the American import of pork, reducing the price in the English market, the fact was, that the

contract price of salt pork per tierce of 320 lbs., which in 1843 was 3*l.* 15*s.* 10*d.*, had advanced in the present year to 6*l.* 12*s.* 11*d.* Now, when the hon. Gentleman was stating that fact of the vast importation of Irish cattle in a quarter of a year, did he not, he would ask him, question thus: if in Ireland, where the soil was much more easily cultivated; where wages were much lower than in this country—for in Ireland he believed the wages of the agricultural labourer were certainly not more than 8*d.* a day in the best part of the year; in addition to which they should also bear in mind that there was no property tax in Ireland, that there was no land tax in Ireland—that if with all these advantages in Ireland the English grazier was notwithstanding able to compete with Irish cattle, had he any real danger to dread from a similar free importation from foreign countries? If the agricultural interests were able to compete—successfully to compete—with the imports from Ireland, a country having a soil more fertile and more easily cultivated, and where wages were lower and where taxes were less than in this country, and where these imports were so great as to amount to 171,000 animals in a single quarter of a year; if, under these circumstances, they were able not only to compete successfully with Ireland, but to obtain the enormous increase of price which he had mentioned; then how, he would ask the hon. Gentleman, did he draw the conclusion that a free importation of cattle from Holland was to prove so dangerous? It was quite beside the question to assert that the encouragement of agriculture in Ireland ought not to be lost sight of. Though it might be an important matter to encourage the agriculture of that country, that could have no more to do with the argument of the hon. Gentleman, that the importation of foreign cattle would prove ruinous to the English farmers, than had the question of the importation of Dutch cattle. It was no encouragement or consolation to the farmers of the country to say, “You are ruined; but then the ruin has been effected not by a foreigner, but by a fellow subject—by the Irish farmer.” But the fact is, you are not ruined by him. Notwithstanding his better soil and his cheaper labour, and his diminished taxation, you are still enabled to compete successfully with him; and why should you not also be able to compete with the Belgian farmer? It had been calculated that there were 1,600,000 oxen required for the

consumption of this country. No less than 200,000 were necessary for the consumption of London alone; and how small a proportion of this number was imported from foreign countries? But what was the fact with regard to the effect of this importation on the price of meat? After reducing the duty on foreign cattle to what was thought before to be so low an amount, was not the price of beef still enormously high in this market, and had not every butcher been obliged latterly even to raise his prices still higher? When the hon. Gentleman, therefore, said that Her Majesty's Government were sacrificing the agricultural interests—that they were acting treacherously towards those who had sent them there—did he produce any proof that such was the fact? On the contrary, had not he shown that the price of cattle, under the last alteration in the Tariff, had increased, and was still increasing; and did it never occur to them, that with improved comforts, with higher wages, or at least with wages which would give an increased command over the necessities of life, there would be a still greater consumption of meat among the population of this country, and that an increased price would arise from an increased demand? Was it not possible that when such was the result during the last three years—there having been a continuance of manufacturing prosperity, and a small quantity of meat having, for the first time during some years, entered into the consumption of a portion of the labouring population of this country—that a continuance and an increase of that prosperity would increase the demand; and, as a necessary consequence, increase the price for meat, when it would be no longer necessary that the working classes should have their food limited to potatoes or bread? The effect of the change in the Tariff, in his opinion, was, that while they increased the comforts of the manufacturer and the labourer, they had not diminished prices for agricultural produce. But it was said, what good had they done by diminishing these import duties? One good effect was, that they had at least put a check on extravagant prices. The hon. Gentleman had stated that the supply of sheep in Smithfield market had fallen off 16,000, and that but for the importation of foreign cattle, the prices now would be much higher than they actually were; but, in his opinion, if the price of meat were now 10d. per lb., instead of 7d. or 8d., the change would not be for the benefit of the agricul-

tural classes. An important consideration, not alluded to by the hon. Gentleman, was, that the free admission of foreign barley would enable the English farmer to compete on still more favourable terms than heretofore with the foreign feeder. The hon. Gentleman opposite (Mr. P. Howard) had suggested that a small duty should be imposed on foreign cattle imported, in order that the actual number brought into this country might be known; but he could tell the hon. Member that, as no smuggling would exist, the precise number imported would be known. He could give the hon. Gentleman and the House every possible assurance that the fullest and most satisfactory information would be secured; and that the precise number of oxen, of sheep, and other animals, would be ascertained by the arrangements contemplated by Her Majesty's Government with perfect regularity and certainty, and without the imposition of any duty. Under all the circumstances, considering the tendency which he thought—if they looked to the state of the market for several years past—they would find to a gradual increase in the price of meat, and considering the advantages which the agriculturists would have in the increased facilities for fattening cattle, he felt bound to adhere to the proposition originally laid down by Her Majesty's Government, of admitting foreign cattle duty free.

MR. FINCH was sure that the right hon. Gentleman would take the line he had taken, and produce the high price of meat as a proof that the English agriculturist had nothing to fear. But the existence of high prices was the worst reason for taking off the duties that it was possible to imagine; because, when the prices were high the duties would go into the pocket of the foreign importer. With respect to the general question, when the right hon. Baronet introduced his measure in 1842, he stated as one reason for allaying the fears of the English agriculturists, that their breed of cattle was as superior that they had nothing to apprehend. But that reason was subsiding every year. Two years ago the Dutch and Belgians had purchased some of the finest animals in the English market; their breeds were improving every year, and in a year or two they would be able to compete with the finest of our breeds. With respect to the increase of prices, this was a mere temporary evil. The British farmer had suffered enormously from the murrain in his

cattle, and if ever there was a time when he required high prices to remunerate him for his loss, it was the present. He knew one farmer, a neighbour of his, who had lost 300*l.* in the course of three months by the murrain in his cattle, and others had lost in proportion. Then they were told that the increase in the price of meat was a reason for the importation of foreign meat. Now, he believed the farmer would have no objection to the operation of the sliding scale, in the case of meat; but when the right hon. Baronet gave as a reason for taking off the duty that the prices were high, he wished to ask whether, when the prices were low, he would put the duty on again. Then the right hon. Baronet said, we could compete with the Irish beasts—why not with the foreigner? Now, he would tell the right hon. Baronet that the introduction of Irish cattle was of the most essential service to the English graziers, for they were introduced into the midland counties to be fattened, and then sent to the London market. But the Dutch or the Belgian cattle would be sent over fattened ready for the market. He despaired, however, of making any impression on the right hon. Baronet; but he would address himself to the free traders opposite. He knew they were anxious to abolish the Excise, and he trusted they had no wish unnecessarily to injure the English farmer. Now, he had lately had a conversation with an intelligent farmer, who told him—and he had made the same statement before a Committee of the other House—that, at the present moment, the excise duty imposed a tax of 3*l.* 10*s.* a head upon their cattle. This was caused by the operation of the malt tax. The right hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer laughed at this statement, which only showed how little he knew of practical agriculture. He should be sorry to make any statement in that House which he was not able to prove in detail, and therefore he would state that there was an inferior sort of barley which could be sold for 24*s.* per quarter. When that barley was malted and paid the duty, it cost 12*l.*; without the duty it would be 6*l.* 10*s.* The same quantity of oil-cake would cost 10*l.*, and the difference between these two prices was 3*l.* 10*s.*, which constituted a tax upon the English feeder to that extent. At the present time, indeed, he might reckon the tax at the whole extent of the price of the oil-cake, or 10*l.*; for, in consequence of last year's barley crop being a good one,

the inferior barley was altogether unsaleable; but at all times the tax would amount to 3*l.* 10*s.* If Her Majesty's Ministers would remit the malt tax, or make such arrangements as would enable the British farmer to feed his cattle with malt free of duty, he should not oppose the present proposition in the Tariff; and he addressed himself on this subject to hon. Gentlemen opposite, because he knew that they were in favour of fair play, and because they knew that in order to carry out free-trade principles they must abolish the Excise.

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said, his hon. Friend had charged him with showing his ignorance of practical agriculture. Now, he must say, that he did not profess to have much practical knowledge of that art; but it would be in the recollection of the House, that last Session the hon. Member for Northamptonshire had brought in a Bill to allow farmers to use malt for fattening their cattle; and at that time it was stated that great doubts were entertained whether malt was better for cattle than raw barley; and great authorities were produced to show that raw barley would fatten cattle sooner, and cause them to yield more milk than feeding them on malt would do. At that time he entered into an engagement with his hon. Friend that the experiment should be fairly tried; and, accordingly, since that time some cattle and cows had been shut up and fed—the one set exclusively on malt, the other on raw barley; and the result had proved that those animals which were fed on raw barley yielded more milk and arrived at maturity in a shorter time than those animals which were fed on malt. He had the proceeds of the experiment here in his hand; they had been moved for by the other House of Parliament, they had been printed, and they would, in a short time, be open to the inspection of Members, who would thus see that instead of the agriculturists being injured to the extent of 3*l.* 10*s.* a head by the operation of the malt tax, it now turned out that if they had been compelled to feed cattle on malt, even without the duty, it would have been doing an injury to the agriculturists. These Papers would, as he had said, be in the hands of Members in a short time; and though he was ignorant of agriculture, and the hon. Member was very profoundly versed in agriculture, yet these experiments would be laid before the House, and the House would see the

results, with all the details of what was eaten by the brown cow and what by the white cow. The experiments were conducted in the neighbourhood of Glasgow, under the superintendence of a gentleman equally eminent in agriculture and in chemistry, and he had no doubt they would prove satisfactory to the House. His hon. Friend had also complained of the influx of cattle from Holland. Now, of all the countries in the world, he should say, if taxation was to be taken as one of the elements of competition, Holland was the least able to compete with our farmers; for, if there was one country in the world taxed more than another, Holland was that country. He apprehended his hon. Friend the Member for Somersetshire was aware of this; for, though he stated that cattle would be brought from Holland, yet he omitted telling the House what was the price of those cattle brought from any part in Holland. So far from sharing in the fears of the hon. Member, that when prices were low there would be an influx of cattle into this country, he believed that when prices were low the importation of cattle would cease to be profitable, and the English agriculturist would retain all the advantages of the home market without having the odium of a monopoly.

SIR J. TYRELL said, the right hon. Gentleman who had just sat down would wish to be believed that he was a practical farmer—[The CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER: No!]
—or, at any rate, he would wish them to be of the opinion that he had given the House a practical statement, as to what was not good for the fattening of cattle. His hon. Friends had not at their command so many learned professors as the right hon. Baronet had; but if the opinions of those learned professors on the subject of fattening cattle with malt, had no greater weight with the country than the Report of another learned Commission, on the potato disease in Ireland, then the statement of the right hon. Gentleman would require greater confirmation than he had yet offered to the House. He believed the real facts of the case were, that when malt was mixed with other grain, it made the cattle thirsty, and thus made them what was called "do better," or fatten better, than when fed on raw barley. But he chiefly rose to answer an observation of the right hon. Baronet, who had been pleased to triumph over the hon. Member for Somerset, because his predictions as to

the mass of pork which would be brought from America had not been fulfilled. Now he wished to ask the right hon. Baronet if he was not answerable for the falling-off in the supply of British cattle, by the introduction, by means of his Tariff, of diseased foreign cattle? He knew he might not have any great character for agricultural knowledge in this House; but he would confidently repeat his statement, that the introduction of foreign cattle which had previously been prohibited, did bring disease into this country, particularly that which was known by the name of the lungs disease, and which had been most fatal in its ravages on cattle. He must, therefore, state to the right hon. Baronet, that the panic caused by his Tariff prevented growers from breeding cattle; that the introduction of disease had cut off many of those which were bred; and that these causes had combined to bring about the increased price of food. There was another cause which the right hon. Baronet would admit had caused an increase in the consumption of meat in this country—he meant the making of railways. Now, he did not believe that the right hon. Baronet would take credit to himself for that prosperity, and yet it had exercised much influence upon the consumption and the price of food.

MR. VILLIERS said, the hon. Baronet (Sir J. Tyrell) was innocent of having produced the panic of which he complained when the last Tariff was passed; for if he remembered rightly the hon. Baronet had addressed his constituents on the occasion, giving them the benefit of his practical knowledge on the subject, and which was certainly calculated to allay their fears, for he assured them that he knew that foreign sheep were of that description that any body could read the newspapers clearly through them, and that more than half the pork would be choked on the voyage. Now as they had not much benefit as yet from the Tariff, he was not prepared to say that the hon. Baronet's information was not correct. If such, however, was the case, why should the hon. Baronet be so much alarmed now; and if the panic was such an evil, why should the hon. Baronet endeavour to produce it; and if it did exist, he asked who produced it? Why, he did not hesitate to say it was the hon. Gentlemen opposite; it was just such speeches as they had heard from the hon. Member for Somerset and the hon. Baronet that produced a panic. This was a matter worthy

of notice ; for if it was impossible to draw their attention to the great interest the people had in the abundance of the necessities of life, and that nothing could induce them to withdraw their opposition on that ground—let them reflect upon the injury they were inflicting on the very interest that they represented. What was the effect of predicting enlarmity to follow from this measure ? Why, it depreciated the price of the articles in question, and at this moment there was not the least doubt but that the price was kept down by the delay occasioned by the Motions and speeches of hon. Gentlemen opposite. [“ Oh, oh ! ”] Hon. Gentlemen might cry “ Oh ! ” but the fact was as he represented it, and on the authority of persons in the trade, that a serious loss was sustained by them owing to this measure being suspended. Hon. Gentlemen would have the opportunity of knowing the fact soon ; and it would be seen whether he or they were right. They knew perfectly well that the measure would pass, and it would be seen then whether the price of foreign wheat would not rise higher than at this moment ; and he put it to the hon. Member for Somerset, who treated every appeal on the score of general interest with indifference, to look at the enormous injury he was inflicting upon the farmers and the dealers whose interests he purposed to represent. He was bound to say that the hon. Gentleman the Member for Somerset put the interest of the consumer entirely out of consideration ; for he treated the measure as one of gratuitous mischief wantonly inflicted upon the producer, and assumed that there were no interests, no wants to be consulted or satisfied by its passing. Throughout the hon. Member’s speech, and throughout the speech of the hon. Member for Essex, not one syllable had been said as to whether the poor had access to meat now, or whether the reduction of duty might not give it to them, and that in the face of the complaint throughout the agricultural districts, that the poor hardly ever touch meat from one year’s end to the other. He did not mean that they had no bacon, but they paid a high price for it ; and that was especially enumerated by the hon. Member for Somerset as one of the articles that in future would be too cheap ; and this was the year, too, in which they had heard a labourer complaining that for forty years he had never but once touched a morsel of meat owing to its price. Why, it was notorious that the agricultural labour-

ers could not afford meat for their families ; and if it were not, the rate of their wages would show that it was impossible ; and yet here hon. Gentlemen and hon. Baronets were endeavouring to make meat dear and scarce. He really knew nothing more astounding than to sit there in what was called a Christian assembly—an assembly of Gentlemen, not apt to underrate their own benevolence, and whose kind care for the poor nobody was allowed to question ; and to hear them one after the other depicting the horrors of plenty, while they endeavoured to raise the price of subsistence and keep food from the poor. Who could have supposed, after all the display of feeling last night about milliners and dressmakers, and the night before about poor framework knitters, who were said to be starving, that night the same Gentlemen would be using the same exertions to deprive them of wholesome food ; and as their wages were low, to make their sufferings more intense. Their condition was actually bad, and had been so for years. It was not the prediction of what it would be after trade was free. To prevent food being cheap, therefore, was a positive evil to them as they were. Really, to hear the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Allix), and the hon. Member for Somerset, one would suppose that the poor depended for life upon clover, and never desired to eat bacon. The hon. Member for Cambridge was quite pathetic about protecting clover on account of the poor ; and the hon. Member for Somerset was horrified at the abundance of bacon that might be poured into this country from America. He believed that the hon. Gentlemen were confounding themselves with the poor when they talked about clover. It was they who were always living in clover ; while the poor would be happy to exchange all the clover they had for all the bacon they could get. The hon. Member for Rutlandshire (Mr. Finch) said, he expected to have fair play at the hands of free traders ; and he hoped he would give them credit also for common humanity, for that was their reason for advocating a change of system, to enable the poor to escape at least from scarcity of food. The hon. Member for Rutlandshire had turned to this side to have his fears about this measure allayed ; but really his own political economy ought to have done that for him without their help. At what time did the hon. Member apprehend danger from removing the duty ? Why, when the prices were low here—that

was the time, he said, when swarms of cattle would come in, that was when the market was bad; he did not want a duty when the price was high—only when it was lower than in other countries. Why, surely the hon. Gentleman's own sense should show him that unless the price were higher here than in other parts of the world, the cattle would not come here at all. The hon. Gentleman the other night wanted to know what would be the price of his wheat if the Corn Law was repealed: and now he wanted to know what his cattle would fetch. Why, surely it was enough to console him for to-night when he reflected that if the worst happened, it must be higher here than in any other part of the world, for its being so was the inducement to bring it hither. This, however, was particularly the time during which the hon. Member apprehended danger from the change; and why? Why, because the hon. Gentleman said, the cattle had had the murrain, because it was unusually scarce, because people had less in this country than usual; that was the time, he said, when the consumer should be especially precluded from getting it elsewhere. Really, he wished the hon. Gentleman would reflect upon the chance he would have of satisfying the consuming public of the justice of such a reason; and having with his friends, eased their conscience by raising their voice against a plentiful supply, he did hope, for the credit of the House, that they would not press this singular motion to a division.

SIR J. TROLLOPE said, that the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had referred to a prediction made by the hon. Member for Somerset (Mr. Miles), which had not been verified; but the hon. Baronet himself had made predictions and promises which should be placed within the memory of the House. He recollected the right hon. Baronet saying most distinctly, that the people of the country would be enabled to save the whole amount of the Income Tax out of the reductions caused by the Tariff. Now, if hon. Members were allowed to rise on the other side of the House and state that the protectionist Members were answerable for the appearance of the panic, the right hon. Baronet should also take his share of the falsifications of the predictions he had made. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had alluded to an experiment which had been made with reference to the feeding of cattle on

malt. How and where the experiment had been conducted he was not aware. It could not have been made by the agriculturists themselves, for the excisemen stopped the course of all experiments of that nature made by farmers. Though allowed to steep barley, they were not allowed to resort to the drying process, whereby alone could he determine the question of malt feeding. But, looking at the general question, the protectionists might perhaps have looked too gloomily upon the effects they feared would result from the introduction of foreign cattle. They, however, were not to be blamed for this, because they relied on the statements of gentlemen who had gone abroad, and were capable, therefore, of estimating the effects likely to flow from a facility afforded to importation. It was but natural that the protectionists feared the adoption of free-trade measures, when it was supposed they would take place all at once. An hon. Member on the other side, the Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. Villiers), instead of addressing himself to the question before the House, had indulged himself with a speech on the Corn Laws. The hon. Member was severe on the Conservatives in that House, because, he said, the protectionists were desirous of limiting the supply of food to the poorer classes of the community. That, however, was a mis-statement of the real condition of things: The protectionists had no wish to limit the supply of food. What they wanted was an abundant supply; but they were desirous that that supply should come from the soil and the agriculturists of this country. The protectionists also contended that the soil of England could supply abundance. It was the course taken by the Legislature which checked the proper supply. The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government would find that as much fluctuation would follow the reduction on corn, as had followed the Tariff on cattle. If the fears of producers were excited, the supply would be checked, and prices would ultimately rise.

MR. BORTHWICK: The hon. Member for Wolverhampton had asked the protectionist side of the House how it came to pass, as they had divided the House in favour of the labouring classes, they could yet unite for keeping up the price of the food of the labouring classes. The hon. Gentleman had made a speech the beginning of which contradicted the end. He had himself said, "Pass this measure, and

corn will rise ;" and then he followed by saying, "How can you (meaning the agricultural Members of the House) knowing that the agricultural labourers are not capable of purchasing animal food, attempt to keep up the price even of their bread?" The hon. Member for Wolverhampton said, "Pass the Bill for Corn Law repeal and the Tariff, and the prices of agricultural produce will be enhanced." How, then, does the hon. Member hope to cheapen the food of milliners, of whom the House had heard something the previous evening, or any other persons? But that was not the only strange argument alleged during the present debate. In the year 1842 the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had passed the Tariff under which foreign cattle had been imported into the country. The right hon. Baronet had then told the House, with reference to Spain—it being believed that that country, by reason of her fertile soil, would be able to export a large number of cattle to England—that the House might rely on his promise when he said not a single hoof would cross the Bay of Biscay. Yes, the right hon. Baronet had stated this; but the fact did not bear out his statement, and a large number of cattle did cross the Bay of Biscay, and did find an entrance into Great Britain. Arguments of equal value were made at the present period. True, it might have been that cattle, like all other produce, did not enter at once in large numbers, because it occupied some years to perfect arrangements for breeding; but, nevertheless, cattle from foreign countries had made their appearance in Great Britain from other lands in considerable numbers; and the Premier's promise that not a hoof would pass the Bay of Biscay, had not been verified. If cattle were to be imported, why not import them lean, to allow the English grazier to fatten them? Another strange statement made by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton was this—he said the wages of the agricultural labourer were exceedingly low; but did he propose to increase the wages of those persons by depreciating the productions of their industry? Yet such was the object of those Gentlemen who sat opposite and called for the repeal of the laws on corn, and for the introduction of cattle free of duty. The hon. Member said, the effect of the intended measure would both be to increase and diminish the amount of wages. He should, however, have stated which effect would be produced. Both arguments would not do. At first the hon.

Member said one thing, and then he said another; but it would be well to know precisely what he meant. This was necessary if an argument upon facts or assertions was to be followed out. It was, however, impossible to fix the members of the Anti-Corn-Law League to any point. That body had not succeeded in many of their undertakings; but in one object they had been successful, namely, that of converting two Cabinets, but by what means was to him wholly unknown. The members of the Anti-Corn-Law League had said, in effect, that they intended to increase the prosperity of all classes by the depreciation of all classes. Such was really the argument used by them. It was said by political economists that the prosperity of all classes was founded on the prosperity of agriculture. Divided as this country was from others, he could not imagine the theory of free trade could be expected to be carried out without injury to those interests engaged in it. If the theory of Napoleon Bonaparte were realized—supposing that only one Exchequer existed, into which the taxation of every country in Europe was payable, then, perhaps, free trade might be carried into effect without injury, because the whole of Europe would then be but one country. But when the funded debt of England was so enormous as it was, and the annual taxation 54,000,000*l.*, he could only refer to the statement of Lord Melbourne, when that noble Lord observed that in the present condition of the country the man who meditated a repeal of the Corn Laws was but a madman. Now, as respected the immediate question before the House, he could not say that any reason had been shown why the Motion of the hon. Member which stood before the House should be negatived. An argument used had been, that as cattle were brought free into England from Ireland, cattle should also be brought free to this country from all the world. Where, he would ask, were the Irish Members of the House? Should they not be in their places opposing the measure that sought to make Ireland a foreign country, and place its resources on the same foundation as Russian and Polish industry? But he would say no more. He rose for the purpose of asking the hon. Member for Wolverhampton to explain how it was that the argument he had used contradicted itself. Knowing the clearness of apprehension which distinguished that hon. Member, he could not understand how it was that the one and the same measure, at

one and the same time, could raise and repress the price of food.

Mr. VILLIERS replied, that what he he said was this, that the inflammatory speeches made by Conservative Gentlemen had had the effect of depressing prices, and that they would rise if the present measure were allowed to pass. The country, it must be remembered, was now suffering under the effect of thirty years' Corn Law, and that pressure must be resumed before the full effect of the change could be known or felt.

Mr. J. WALSH observed, that the hon. Member for Wolverhampton had attributed personal selfishness to the agricultural Members in the House, and indeed to the agriculturists generally. The agricultural Members in that House were, however, the representatives of a great national interest, upon which the prosperity of all other classes was founded, and therefore they contended that no change could be made detrimental to its condition which would not also prove injurious to all other branches of industry. It was both unfair and unjust in the hon. Member for Wolverhampton to say that agriculturists acted only under the greatest selfishness. The agriculturists and the agricultural Members of that House were acting as fairly as other men, and if the protective Members chose to retort, they might say that Gentlemen asking for the repeal of the Corn Laws only did so to support their own interest, because their own interests were mixed up with the repeal. The agricultural Members might say the Members of the Anti-Corn-Law League were only desirous of filling their own purses. Therefore the protection Members of that House thought the attack made on themselves was an uncalled-for and unjust imputation. He could not agree with the measure, and he was of opinion that it would not tend to the prosperity or the pacification of Ireland. He was fully of opinion that the agitation for the repeal of the Union in that country which had brought the nation to the verge of a civil war, owed its rise to the operation of the Tariff. The Government had this Session been adopting temporary measures for the relief of Ireland, and while they did so, it was strange that they were also attempting to pass measures only aggravating evils they attempted to remove.

Mr. YORKE said, he represented a constituency quite as large as that of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, and

whose interests were quite as important as those of the constituency of the hon. Member for Durham, and he thought that their feelings of alarm were not likely to be allayed by the language used by those hon. Members. He (Mr. Yorke) rose, merely for the purpose of saying that the reason for the price of cattle being so low in former years, was the general failure of the peculiar crops on which cattle were fed. The consequence of this failure was, that one-fourth more cattle were thrown on the market, and the prices became so small as to be scarcely anything. Now there were enormous green crops, and the farmers kept their cattle for store instead of sending them in for consumption. With respect to the probable supply, he had no faith in the professions of Government, as he recollected that on a former occasion, 10,000 head of cattle were fixed as the highest number likely to be imported under the Tariff, and he also recollected how that prophecy had been falsified. He should therefore resist this Resolution, as he should everything tending to diminish protection on British agriculture.

Mr. C. KNIGHTLEY said, that great ravages had been made among cattle by disease. He had himself lost thirty oxen by disease, and his tenants had lost many. This had caused the high price. A project, however, was on foot, which would tend to make Smithfield one of the worst markets in the kingdom. A company of merchants had hired iron steamers for the purpose of trading between this country and Russia, and when it was recollected the bullocks were so plentiful in that country that they were slaughtered for fat only, if a railroad were opened between Moscow and St. Petersburg, an immense quantity of beasts would be brought from the interior for exportation to Great Britain. If this followed, breeders in this country would be as much reduced as the country would be injured by the measures of the Government. He should give such measures his strenuous opposition.

Mr. C. BRUCE contended, that the breeders of cattle in this country would be injured by the measures of the Government. In 1844, the number of cattle imported was 159; in 1845, the number was 4,920; and in 1846, 16,870 were imported.

Lord G. BENTINCK: I will not join in the apprehension that any large quantity of cattle will be imported into this country; and a duty of 1*l.* per head is not

more than a duty of 10 per cent., which I do not think prohibitory. But the hon. Gentleman the Member for Wolverhampton has stated that the poor of this country, as a body, scarcely ever taste meat. Let me, however, remind the hon. Member that the people of England eat more meat than the people of any other country—the average quantity per head being 92 lbs. in this country, whilst it is not more than 50 lbs. in others; and when the hon. Gentleman turns round, and says we wish to starve the people of England—that we wish to deprive them of the means of eating the meat which the people of other nations enjoy, I must say that it is an allegation which has no sort of foundation in fact. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, too, has said that it is we who keep down the price of grain by delaying the passing of these measures. Now, I am aware that it is said by some parties, in order to serve their own purposes, that the more you increase the supplies in proportion to the demand, the higher will be the price of provisions; but that is a doctrine which has never been promulgated by any Gentleman of common understanding until now. The hon. Gentleman says further, that this measure of the Government must pass into a law. But, Sir, I do not know that; and, on the contrary, so far as I am informed, I believe there is good cause for hoping that whatever may have been the conduct of hon. Gentlemen on this (the Conservative) side of the House, although they may have abandoned their principles and deserted their party, there is yet another House of Parliament which will not so disgrace itself; and I apprehend that, if the other House of Parliament should reject this measure, and there should be an appeal to the country, if I may be allowed to form a judgment from the results of the appeals which have recently been made to the constituencies of Gloucestershire, Dorsetshire, and Northamptonshire—if I may judge from similar results in my own native county, this (the protection) party, who have honestly stood by their pledges, and not broken their faith, who have not participated in the disgrace of breaking the faith of Parliament, of dishonouring the Parliament of this country; I am much mistaken, I say, if this party will not come back to this House greatly strengthened by the support of those constituencies that have been betrayed during the present Session.

The Committee divided on the Question that Oxen and Bulls stand part of the Revenue. II.

solution:—Ayes 111; Noes 72: Majority 39.

List of the AYES.

Acland, T. D.	Howard, P. H.
Aldam, W.	James, Sir W. C.
Baine, W.	Jocelyn, Visct.
Bannerman, A.	Kelly, Sir F.
Barclay, D.	Kelly, J.
Barnard, E. G.	Labouchere, rt. hon. H.
Berkeley, hon. C.	Langston, J. H.
Berkeley, hon. Capt.	Loch, J.
Blewitt, R. J.	Lockhart, A. E.
Botfield, B.	M'Geachy, F. A.
Bowles, Adm.	M'Neill, D.
Bowring, Dr.	M'Taggart, Sir J.
Bright, J.	Mahon, Visct.
Brotherton, J.	Marshall, W.
Browne, hon. W.	Martin, J.
Bruges, W. H. L.	Martyn, C. W.
Buller, C.	Mitchell, T. A.
Busfield, W.	Molesworth, Sir W.
Cardwell, E.	Morison, Gen.
Carnegie, hon. Capt.	Neville, R.
Chapman, B.	O'Brien, J.
Clerk, rt. hon. Sir G.	Ord, W.
Cochrane, A.	Peel, rt. hon. Sir R.
Cockburn, rt. hon. Sir G.	Peel, J.
Corry, rt. hon. H.	Philips, G. R.
Cripps, W.	Philpotts, J.
Dalrymple, Capt.	Plumridge, Capt.
Dashwood, G. H.	Price, Sir R.
Dennistoun, G. A.	Protheroe, E.
Dickinson, F. H.	Russell, Lord J.
Douglas, Sir C. E.	Scrope, G. P.
Duke, Sir J.	Seymour, Lord
Duncan, Visct.	Smith, B.
Duncan, G.	Somers, J. P.
Duncombe, T.	Stansfield, W. R. C.
Dundas, Adm.	Strutt, E.
Ebrington, Visct.	Tancred, H. W.
Elphinstone, H.	Thesiger, Sir F.
Escott, B.	Thornley, T.
Ewart, W.	Trelawny, J. S.
Fitzroy, hon. H.	Trench, Sir F. W.
Fleetwood, Sir P. H.	Turner, E.
Forster, M.	Villiers, hon. C.
Gore, hon. R.	Villiers, Visct.
Goulburn, rt. hon. H.	Warburton, H.
Graham, rt. hon. Sir J.	Wawn, J. T.
Greene, T.	White, S.
Grosvenor, Lord R.	Williams, W.
Hamilton, Lord C.	Wilshire, W.
Hanmer, Sir J.	Wood, Col. T.
Hatton, Capt.	Wortley, hon. J. S.
Hawes, B.	Wyse, T.
Heathcoat, J.	Yorke, H. R.
Herbert, rt. hon. S.	
Hill, Lord M.	
Hogg, J. W.	
Hope, G. W.	

TELLERS.

Young, J.
Baring, H.

List of the NOES.

Allix, J. P.	Bentinck, Lord H.
Arbuthnot, hon. H.	Beresford, Major
Arkwright, G.	Borthwick, P.
Baillie, H. J.	Brooke, Lord
Bell, M.	Bruce, C. L. C.
Benett, J.	Buck, L. W.
Bennet, P.	Cayley, E. S.
Bentinck, Lord G.	Colville, C. R.

F

Compton, H. C.
 Dismeli, B.
 Douglas, Sir H.
 Farnham, E. B.
 Filmer, Sir E.
 Finch, G.
 Floyer, J.
 Forbes, W.
 Forman, T. S.
 Frewen, C. H.
 Fuller, A. E.
 Gardner, J. D.
 Gordon, hon. Capt.
 Granby, Marg. of
 Halford, Sir H.
 Halsey, T. P.
 Heathcote, Sir W.
 Henley, J. W.
 Hildyard, T. B. T.
 Hinde, J. H.
 Hope, Sir J.
 Hope, A.
 Hudson, G.
 Inglis, Sir R. H.
 Jolliffe, Sir W. G. H.
 Knightley, Sir C.
 Lawson, A.
 Lefroy, A.
 Liddell, hon. H. T.
 Mackenzie, T.

Manners, Lord C. S.
 March, Earl of
 Maunsell, T. P.
 Neeld, J.
 Newdegate, C. N.
 Newport, Vicar.
 O'Brien, A. S.
 Palmer, G.
 Plumptre, J. P.
 Rolleston, Col.
 Round, C. G.
 Round, J.
 Scott, hon. F.
 Seymour, H. K.
 Shaw, rt. hon. F.
 Sihthorp, Col.
 Smyth, Sir H.
 Stanley, E.
 Thompson, Ald.
 Tower, C.
 Tarnor, C.
 Tyrell, Sir J. T.
 Walsh, Sir J. B.
 Wodehouse, E.
 Worcester, Marg. of
 Yorke, hon. E. T.

TELLERS.

Miles, W.
 Trollope, Sir J.

On the Question—

"That 'Hides, or pieces thereof, tawed, curried, varnished, japanned, enamelled, Muscovy, or Russia Hides, or pieces thereof, tanned, coloured, shaved, or otherwise dressed, and Hides, or pieces thereof, in any way dressed, not otherwise enumerated,' stand part of the Resolution—"

MR. LAWSON said, he was one of those who, in 1842, had supported the Government in their proposal to reduce the duty on foreign hides, because it was said that the reduction of that duty would benefit the labouring classes, in reference to the price they would have to give for their shoes and boots. But he found that, on the contrary, the price of leather to the working classes had not decreased in consequence of the measure of 1842, whilst an injury had been done to the agricultural interest. The present proposition related, too, not only to raw hides, but to curried hides also; and this was an additional reason why he should, as he now begged to do, move the omission of the article from the Resolution.

SIR J. TYRELL, in seconding the Amendment of the hon. Member, said, that his object in rising had been to state to the House a fact which had come to his knowledge in the course of the last few days, and which had been represented to him by a clergyman of the county he had the honour to represent, namely, the fact of a most respectable tanner in that county having within a very short time turned off

no fewer than ten of his workmen; and he contemplated the dismissal of as many more. One fact, it was a common observation, was worth a thousand arguments; and, therefore, he had thought it his duty to name this striking one to the House. These workmen had been—they and their fathers before them—in the employment of this respectable tanner and his predecessors for the last hundred years. Now, he should like to be told by some Member of Her Majesty's Government, what was the process by which these industrious tanners were now to be employed? How were they, to use the free-trade phraseology of the day, to be "absorbed?" He presumed that the workhouse would alone be enabled to tell the tale of these poor men's industrious endeavours, vain as they now must be, to support their wives and families. He believed that they had been in the habit of attending the Anti-Corn-Law meetings, and of hearing the statements of the League lecturers, that the advantages of having the cheap loaf would be so great as to cover all other difficulties they might meet with, and that it would be a great advantage to working tanners to have the free importation of foreign hides. He knew that the answer which hon. Gentlemen opposite gave to cases of this kind was, that free trade in corn would cure all the disadvantages under which the workman might labour—that the measure of the Government was a great and comprehensive measure; and he doubted not that they would refuse to condescend to tell the House why it was that these poor tanners were to be exposed to that hard reverse; still, he asked, and with some curiosity, on what employment it was that these parties were now to be enabled to bestow their labour and skill, in order to gain an honest livelihood?

SIR G. CLERK said, the ease to which the hon. Gentleman had referred afforded a strong illustration of what had been already urged in that House, that while it remained a matter of uncertainty what would be the issue of the Government measure, every trade would be paralysed. The cheapening of leather must necessarily benefit the shoemakers of this country, and enable them to compete successfully with those of France. What was the effect of the reduction of the duty in 1842? Why, the importation of foreign hides in 1843 was 585,000 cwt., which was increased in 1844 to 637,000 cwt.; and last year, 719,000 cwt. If, however, he

was told by the hon. Member that the price of boots and shoes had not been reduced by the reduction of the duty, he would have the hon. Member consider what would have been the price of boots and shoes and of every other article made of leather if the admission of foreign hides had been resisted altogether. The fact was, that in ordinary times the power of consumption in this country increased in a more rapid ratio than the means of supplying the demand. It was quite true that the price of leather had not been reduced; and seeing this to be the case, with the reduction already made, was it not the bounden duty of the Government, not only to protect the shoe trade of this country, but also to enable the consumer of these articles to obtain them at a lower price, by allowing leather in a dressed state to come in duty free? Now, he did not entertain any feelings of danger to the tanners in England by the proposed reduction. He asked, with the skill which this country possessed, what was to prevent the tanners from producing leather as cheap and as good as any country in the world? This country possessed peculiar facilities for the manufacture of leather which no other country in the world had. This was another case in which, he believed, not a single representation had been made by persons connected with the leather trade against the proposed reduction of duty. Last year, when it was proposed to take the duty off tanned leather, the tanners complained that the reduction would place them in a very disadvantageous position, in consequence of the price of provisions. They said, that if protection was reduced upon corn and provisions, they would not then be at all afraid of competing with the leather manufactures of any part of the world. Under those circumstances, he was convinced that the measures now proposed by Her Majesty's Government would meet with the hearty concurrence of those Gentlemen who last year remonstrated against the reduction upon leather. The Government, at any rate, would have the satisfaction of knowing that by the reduction they were enabling the poor man to procure these necessary articles at a more moderate rate than he had hitherto done.

The Committee divided on the original Question:—Ayes 130; Noes 74: Majority 56.

List of the AYES.

Acland, T. D.

Aglionby, H. A.

Aldam, W.
Baine, W.
Baring, rt. hon. F. T.
Barnard, E. G.
Berkeley, hon. C.
Berkeley, hon. Capt.
Blewitt, R. J.
Bodkin, W. H.
Botfield, B.
Bowles, Adm.
Bowring, Dr.
Bright, J.
Brotherton, J.
Browne, hon. W.
Bruce, Lord B.
Bruges, W. H. L.
Buller, C.
Busfield, W.
Cardwell, E.
Carnegie, hon. Capt.
Chapman, B.
Childers, J. W.
Clay, Sir W.
Clerk, rt. hon. Sir J.
Cochrane, A.
Cockburn, rt. hon. Sir J.
Collett, J.
Crawford, W. S.
Dalrymple, Capt.
Dashwood, G. H.
Dennistoun, J.
Dickinson, F. H.
Duke, Sir J.
Duncan, Visct.
Duncan, G.
Duncombe, T.
Dundas, Adm.
Easthope, Sir J.
Ehrington, Visct.
Elphinstone, H.
Escott, B.
Etwall, R.
Ewart, W.
Feilden, W.
Ferguson, Col.
Fitzroy, hon. H.
Fitzroy, Lord C.
Fleetwood, Sir P. H.
Forster, M.
Gore, hon. R.
Goulburn, rt. hon. H.
Graham, rt. hon. Sir J.
Grey, rt. hon. Sir G.
Grosvenor, Lord R.
Hall, Sir B.
Hamilton, Lord C.
Hammer, Sir J.
Hatton, Capt. V.
Hayter, W. G.
Heathcoat, J.
Herbert, rt. hon. S.
Hill, Lord M.
Hindley, C.
Hobhouse, rt. hon. Sir J.
Hogg, J. W.
Hope, G. W.

Howard, P. H.
James, Sir W. C.
Jocelyn, Visct.
Kelly, Sir F.
Kelly, J.
Labouchere, rt. hon. H.
Langston, J. H.
Layard, Capt.
Loch, J.
Lockhart, A. E.
Macaulay, rt. hon. T. B.
McCarthy, A.
McGeachy, F. A.
McNeill, D.
Mahon, Visct.
Marshall, W.
Martin, J.
Martin, C. W.
Masterman, J.
Meynell, Capt.
Mitchell, T. A.
Molesworth, Sir W.
Morris, D.
Neville, R.
O'Brien, J.
Ord, W.
Osborne, R.
Paget, Col.
Peel, rt. hon. Sir R.
Peel, J.
Pennant, hon. Col.
Phillips, G. R.
Plumridge, Capt.
Price, Sir R.
Protheroe, E.
Rawdon, Col.
Russell, Lord J.
Russell, Lord E.
Scrope, G. P.
Seymour, Lord
Sheridan, R. B.
Smith, B.
Smyth, Sir H.
Somers, J. P.
Stansfield, W. R. C.
Stuart, H.
Strutt, E.
Tancred, H. W.
Thesiger, Sir F.
Thornley, T.
Trelawny, G. S.
Trench, Sir F. W.
Turner, E.
Villiers, hon. C.
Villiers, Visct.
Warburton, H.
Wawn, J. T.
Wood, C.
Wood, Col. T.
Wortley, hon. J. S. S.
Wyse, T.
Yorke, H. R.

TELLERS.

Young, R.
Cripps, W.

List of the NOES.

Acton, Col.
Allix, J. P.
Arkwright, G.
Astell, W.

Bateson, T.
Benett, J.
Bennett, P.
Bentinck, Lord G.

Beetneek, Lord H.
 Beresford, Maj.
 Borthwick, P.
 Brooke, Lord
 Bruce, C. L. C.
 Buller, Sir J. Y.
 Clayton, R. R.
 Clifton, J. T.
 Colville, C. R.
 Compton, H. C.
 Dick, Q.
 Disraeli, B.
 Douglas, Sir H.
 Farnham, E. B.
 Filmer, Sir E.
 Finch, G.
 Floyer, J.
 Forbes, W.
 Frewen, C. H.
 Fuller, A. E.
 Gardoer, J. D.
 Gooch, E. S.
 Goring, C.
 Granby, Marq. of
 Grogan, E.
 Halford, Sir H.
 Halsey, T. P.
 Harris, hon. Capt.
 Henley, J. W.
 Hildyard, T. B. T.
 Hinde, J. H.
 Hope, Sir J.
 Hudson, G.
 Horst, R. H.
 Inglis, Sir R. H.

Jolliffe, Sir W. G. H.
 Knightley, Sir C.
 Lennox, Lord G. H. G.
 Liddell, hon. H. T.
 Manners, Lord C. S.
 Maunsell, T. P.
 Maxwell, hon. J. P.
 Miles, P. W. S.
 Miles, W.
 Neeld, J.
 Newdegate, C. N.
 Newport, Visct.
 O'Brien, A. S.
 Palmer, G.
 Plumptre, J. P.
 Rashleigh, W.
 Repton, G. W. J.
 Rolleston, Col.
 Scott, hon. F.
 Seymour, H. K.
 Shaw, rt. hon. F.
 Sibthorp, Col.
 Stanley, E.
 Thompson, Ald.
 Trollope, Sir J.
 Turner, C.
 Waddington, H. S.
 Walsh, Sir J. B.
 Wodehouse, E.
 Worcester, Marq. of
 Wynn, Sir W. W.
 Yorke, hon. E. T.
 TELLERS.
 Lawson, A.
 Tyrell, Sir J. T.

tion in the wages paid to the labourer. He did not make this assertion on a mere supposition, but from facts which had actually occurred a short time since. During the late recess a deputation of poor men waited upon him, who stated that they and their families had been thrown out of work for this reason, that the master manufacturers had promised them an increase of 10 per cent. upon their wages, but that they had subsequently confessed prices were so low they could not make the advance they had been led to hope they would be able to do. The consequence was that those poor men left their employment and had called upon him for a subscription to enable them to continue holding out against their masters. The answer he returned to the deputation was, that though the masters had not been his political friends in the borough, still he could not depart from a principle he had ever maintained, namely, that he would not support any class of men against their employers. He believed he could safely say that what those men had stated to him was strictly correct, viz., that they expected an increase of 10 per cent. upon their wages—that they could not get it, and that they had quitted their employment in consequence, and were then out of work. Instead of aiding those persons by a subscription in order to hold out against their employers, he had found work for them, which was, he considered, a much more salutary mode of relief. If the master manufacturers could not now pay fair and remunerating prices, how could they do so if a further reduction of 10 per cent should take place; and if the master manufacturers could not continue their competition, what would become of the handloom weavers? On the present occasion he would not trouble the House with many observations, as he did not intend to divide the Committee upon it, but at the same time, if he had not remonstrated against the Resolution, he should consider he had not done his duty to his constituents. It was his intention upon the present occasion, and upon all similar occasions, to give his vote in favour of protection to domestic industry; and he hoped it would not be considered disparaging to his character if he defended Knaresborough linen against German, or any other article of native produce against foreign. He should, in common with the Gentlemen who occupied seats round him, at least have the satisfaction of knowing that, however great might be the majority against them, they

On the Question—

“That Linen, viz., Plain Linens and Diaper, whether chequered or striped with Dye Yarn or not, and Manufactures of Linen, or of Linen mixed with Cotton, or with Wool, not particularly enumerated, or otherwise charged with Duty, not being articles wholly or in part made up, stand part of the Resolution”—

Mr. LAWSON said, he regretted being obliged to rise so soon again, but he could not discharge his duty faithfully if he permitted a Resolution to pass which would have the effect of injuring the interests of his constituents, without recording his opposition against it. In rising to do so, he felt bound to state that he was not actuated by any representations from the master manufacturers, for as far as they were concerned, he believed the growth of home flax rendered them able to compete with foreigners in the manufacture of linen. But while he made this statement, he could not forget the large class of labourers who were employed under the master manufacturers, and who would be injured by any reduction in the price of the manufactured article. He could not disguise his belief that the master manufacturers could successfully compete with the foreigner; but such competition could only be maintained by an immediate reduc-

had supported those measures which they considered were the best for the welfare and prosperity of the country.

Mr. DUNCAN said, that although he represented a manufacturing community, comprising not less than 70,000 persons who were engaged in the linen trade, he was prepared to support the proposition brought forward by Her Majesty's Ministers. He was perfectly convinced that he was speaking the sentiments of the whole of the linen manufacturers of Scotland, when he declared that they were anxious that everything in the shape of duty should be taken off, and that nothing in the semblance of protection should be given to their trade. Concurring as he did most cordially in those views, he should have great pleasure in supporting the proposition of the Government now before the House.

Question agreed to.

On the 6th Resolution—

"That, from and after the 5th day of April, 1847, the Duties of Customs now payable upon the Foreign Goods under mentioned shall cease and determine, and that in lieu thereof there shall be charged the following Duties on such Foreign Goods on their importation into the United Kingdom, viz.—

Mr. MITCHELL then rose to move his Amendment upon the proposition affecting the Timber Duties. It was—

"To leave out '1847' in order to insert '1846' instead thereof."

The hon. Member said, that the proposed delay in reducing the duties was fraught with disadvantage—that such suspensions were always injurious to all parties, and that the change ought to take place at once. He contended that the Canadian timber interest would not be injured by the reduction of duties—that wood from that Colony would always have the preference over Baltic timber in constructing articles for domestic use, from its superior capabilities for being wrought.

The Question was put that 1847 stand part of the Resolution.

Mr. CARDWELL stated, that he would address his observations to the last remarks made by the hon. Gentleman when supporting his Motion. The effect of taking the duty off the article of timber would be to give the whole benefit to the consumer in our own country, and not to the producer. To regulate the time when any reduction ought to be made in such an article, would require much judgment and consideration. He (Mr. Cardwell) thought he could prove the remarks of the hon.

Gentleman were calculated to tell against him, rather than to support his argument. The hon. Gentleman had stated that if notices had been given early in the winter, large supplies of timber could have been brought into this market from Prussia and Russia, which could not be the case now. The House had been called upon to determine at what period it was to reduce the duty on timber; but he contended that, both by the first and second statement of the hon. Gentleman, the House of Commons was called on to negative the Amendment. The period at which a reduction of duties on timber was to commence, had been a matter of mature consideration with the Government; and it had been agreed that the measure proposed was that most likely to prove beneficial. That measure he hoped the House would pass. There were at all periods large stocks in hand, and it certainly ought to be an object of consideration to avoid, on the one hand, injury to those who had large stocks, and, on the other hand, to see that no loss should accrue by adopting an over indulgent view of the case. If the Amendment were carried, it would be decisive on the question, and practically the duties would cease and determine. He would only submit that, on the showing of the hon. Member, and on other grounds, the House ought to resist the Amendment.

Sir J. HANMER begged to say, that a long time before any change of this kind was in contemplation, or at least known to the public, he had, in consequence of a conversation which he had with some of his constituents, arrived at quite a contrary conclusion from that of the hon. Member (Mr. Mitchell). He (Sir J. Hanmer) concurred in the views taken by the Government, believing they were based upon a sound principle.

Mr. MITCHELL would not trouble the House by dividing.

The Question agreed to.

On the Question that the House do agree with the Committee on the said Resolution,

LORD G. BENTINCK said, that as it might not be possible to finish the debate on timber that night, inasmuch as it might occupy six hours, it would, he thought, be convenient for all parties to adjourn the debate on timber to Friday next.

Debate adjourned till Friday.

House adjourned at half-past Eleven o'clock.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Friday, March 20, 1846.

THE CORN LAW.

LORD JOHN RUSSELL: I wish, on this occasion to ask the right hon. Gentleman a question with respect to the course to be pursued with the Bill for the repeal of the Corn Law. Eight weeks have now elapsed since Her Majesty made Her Gracious Speech from the Throne. The right hon. Gentleman, after making his first statement of the measure he intended to bring forward, allowed a fortnight for its consideration, before any discussion of it was called for. Three weeks were then engaged in a preliminary discussion; and after that the Bill was introduced. It does seem to me, therefore, that after so much discussion, the right hon. Gentleman would be perfectly justified in doing that which he declared it was his intention to do, namely, to go on with the discussion of that Bill, from day to day, until the measure should be brought to a close. I should have thought it unnecessary to mention this, had it not been that another right hon. Gentleman, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, stated, in answer to a question put to him the other evening, that it was his intention, on the first day after the second reading of the Corn Bill, to propose the first reading of the Bill for the Protection of Life in Ireland. Now, I could very well understand how, if it was thought that the Corn Bill was of such urgency that all other measures should be postponed to it, that the right hon. Gentleman should have postponed this measure relating to Ireland, and have gone on with the Corn Bill until it was finally disposed of. But such I do not understand to be the intention of the right hon. Gentleman; and such being the case, I think the passing of that Bill will not be hastened a single day by the postponement of the Bill for altering the Corn Law. And on other grounds, I think there will be great inconvenience from longer delaying this measure. If the third reading of the Corn Bill have to be postponed for the first reading of the Irish Bill, that third reading might have taken place during the time that the first reading of the Irish Bill would otherwise take up; and the effect will only be further to delay the second reading of the Irish Bill; so that no time will be gained in the passing of that Bill to which the right hon.

Gentleman the Secretary of State for the Home Department attaches great importance. I wish therefore to express my hope that the right hon. Gentleman the First Lord of the Treasury will adhere to the regulation which he stated he should adopt. Certainly, I do not complain, with reference either to the promoters of the measure, or those who oppose it, of any delay that has taken place. But I think there has been so full and sufficient a discussion of the measure, as to call upon the right hon. Gentleman, without any risk of being charged with hastening on the measure with undue precipitancy, to proceed at once from the second reading to the Committee on the Bill.

STR R. PEEL: Sir, I can assure the noble Lord that I never felt greater anxiety with regard to the progress of a measure, than I do with regard to the progress of the Corn Bill. I have received communications from many parts of the country, from those even who are adverse to the policy of Her Majesty's Government, earnestly desiring that some decision on the Corn Bill should be come to. In the first place, there are many who feel that, on account of the state of the crop in this country, there would be the greatest advantage in having free access to that corn which is now in bond, in order that it may be mixed with the corn of this country which is not in a state for making the finest flour. And on that account, on account of the peculiar state of our harvest, there is especial inconvenience in delaying the decision of Parliament with regard to the duties which shall attach to foreign corn; because it is quite clear that, in the expectation that foreign corn will be admitted at a duty of 4s. instead of 18s. that no foreign corn will be taken out of bond. That has a most material effect upon the demand for our own domestic produce; and, in point of fact, for some weeks past, there has been less corn sold in those towns, the markets of which determine the average that regulate duty, than has been the case, I believe, at any former period. Independently of these considerations it must be borne in mind that the Resolutions respecting all the Customs Duties having been reported to this House, the Treasury has, in conformity with the established usage, directed the Customs to permit all articles included in the Tariff to be admitted at the new rate of duty. Consequently, at the present period, all the articles which

compete with the great manufactures of this country are now admitted at a low duty. A bond having been taken from the parties that they will abide the ultimate decision of Parliament, with reference to these duties—all foreign articles of manufacture connected with the linen, with the woollen, and with the cotton manufactures—all foreign articles, almost without exception, are admitted under that Treasury order at a duty of ten per cent.; and many articles connected with agriculture—all cattle, for instance—are, under that Treasury order, admitted duty free. That constitutes another very urgent reason why the decision of Parliament with regard to the Corn Laws should be pronounced at as early a period as possible. If it is pronounced at an early period, of course there will be no difficulty in enforcing the bond that has been given to pay the higher duties. But, the longer the time that elapses between this freedom from duty, or this reduction of duty, and that period when, if higher duties be demanded, they must be required from the parties, the greater will be the embarrassment caused, and the greater will be the difficulty of enforcing the payment of these higher duties. On those grounds, I am certainly most anxious that we should proceed with all expedition consistent with due deliberation on the Corn Laws; and it certainly is my intention, so far as the measures of Government are concerned, to postpone every question which can possibly be postponed, which might interfere with the progress of the Corn Bill. But, then, we are in this position with respect to a Bill of very great importance which has been sent down from the other House—a Bill, the introduction of which nothing could justify but an urgent necessity, in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government, that some extraordinary law should at once be passed. If we took no step whatever with regard to this Bill—and I apprehend it is not impossible even for us not to read this Bill a first time till after the Corn Bill has been disposed of—but I confess it would be a very unusual proceeding, when a Bill has been sent down to us from the other House, to postpone all proceedings on it whatever for some weeks. I am, therefore, compelled to take this course; but I take it with considerable reluctance. I propose—adhering to the arrangement that was made on another night—I propose to take the second reading of the Corn Bill on Monday next. After the second reading of the Corn Bill, I think it would

be right that the House should have the opportunity of expressing an opinion upon the first reading of the Bill for the Prevention of the crime of Assassination in Ireland. But I should not propose that any other stage of that Bill should interfere with the progress of the Corn Bill. I should propose, therefore, to fix the first reading of the Bill for the Prevention of Assassination on Friday next. It is possible the debate on the second reading of the Corn Bill may terminate on Thursday; but if it should not—if the anticipation of my noble Friend, that the debate will proceed till Friday, and then terminate, should be realized—in that case, I should propose, certainly, that the continued debate on the Corn Bill should have precedence over the first reading of the Irish Bill; and it would be necessary, in that case, to fix the first reading of the Irish Bill for the Monday following. But as it is possible that the debate on the Corn Bill may terminate on Thursday, I will now fix it for Friday, with the distinct understanding that the first reading of the Irish Bill shall not interfere with the second reading of the Corn Bill, though I think it possible that that debate may not terminate till Friday night. As I have stated, I yield the precedence to the first reading of this Bill with great reluctance; because I am convinced that it is of very great importance to all parties—I do not say that the Bill should pass, but that the ultimate decision of the House upon the subject should be known. We all know that trade is affected to the utmost extent by the uncertainty that prevails. I should have thought it contrary to all usage, and of course inconsistent with the great importance of the subject, to have adopted any other plan; and I have suggested that course which appeared to me, upon the whole, to be most consistent with the public interest.

CUSTOMS AND CORN IMPORTATION REPORT.

The Order of the Day for resuming the Adjourned Debate on the Question that the House do agree with the Committee on the Resolution respecting Timber, being read,

The MARQUESS OF WORCESTER spoke as follows: I will not trouble the House long, but I am desirous of stating the reasons which compel me to oppose the present Resolution. I am anxious to accept the challenge thrown out by the right hon. Gentleman the other evening, whether the

interests of the producer, as well as those of the consumer, have or have not been benefited by the reduced duties of the Tariff. Now, for this purpose, I will take the first four years immediately preceding the late Tariff, and the four years which have passed since that time, and I find that in the years 1838, 1839, 1840, and 1841, according to *Prince's Price Current*, which, I believe, is considered in these matters as good an authority as the *Gazette*, that the average price of timber was 5*l.* 11*s.* I will pass by the year of the Tariff, for that was naturally a year of great stagnation and uncertainty, but in that year the price was 5*l.* 5*s.* I then come to the years 1843, 1844, 1845, and 1846, and I find that in January last the price had fallen to 4*l.* 18*s.* 4½*d.* being a difference and deficiency of 12*s.* 7½*d.* Another reason why these reduced duties must injure the producer of timber is to be derived from the free importations now permitted, of tan leather. In consequence of the increased importation of that article, the demand for bark decreases, and a serious injury is in that indirect way inflicted upon the timber trade. But, in my opinion, it is the duty of the House to look not only to the home but to the colonial producer; and I invite its attention, while I briefly state the recent changes which have been made in the differential duties between colonial and foreign timber. Previously to the Tariff of 1842, the duty upon Baltic timber was 55*s.*, and the cost of conveyance was 55*s.* also. The duty upon the timber of Canada was 10*s.*, and so there was at that time a differential duty of no less than 45*s.* in favour of the colonial producer. But in the year 1842 the duty upon Baltic timber was reduced from 55*s.* to 30*s.*, and in 1843 there was another reduction to 25*s.* The Canadian timber was also reduced from 10*s.* to 1*s.*, and consequently there was left only a protective duty of 24*s.* It is now proposed to reduce the duty upon foreign timber from 25*s.* to 20*s.*, and that in 1847 there shall be a still further reduction to 15*s.* So there will only be a protective duty of 14*s.* I trust also that the House will not forget that the carrying trade of Canadian timber is almost entirely in the hands of British merchants, and that it almost exclusively employs British seamen; and that, on the other hand, at least five-sixths of the Baltic timber trade is carried on by Prussians, Russians, Danes, Swedes, by all the nations which lie upon the Baltic. I believe it is calculated that in the Baltic timber trade there are em-

ployed 32,900 seamen, and of that amount the number of Englishmen is only 6,505. Are we then, I ask, to legislate for the benefit of the Prussians and the Swedes, for the benefit of the nations that lie upon the Baltic, or for the benefit of Englishmen? And how are the shipowners of Great Britain to contend against such odds as these? The hon. Member for Wolverhampton said, the other evening, that, if any foreigners were to come into this House, they would be astonished at the course pursued by the Gentlemen who occupy these benches; but I say that if any foreigners were to come here, they would be more astonished at the course pursued by Her Majesty's Ministers in protecting foreign consumers, and in levying heavy taxes on their own countrymen. The course pursued by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, and the hon. Member for Stockport, has been true, and firm, and honest—consistent with the feelings they have expressed for years; but I confess I do not understand the course of Her Majesty's Government. I cannot understand a change which suddenly occurs during winter time. I do not see any reason why Her Majesty's Ministers should have reduced these duties, when the price of timber is now lower than it was last year; and seeing no reason for the reduction, but, on the contrary, believing that the reduction will operate most injuriously towards the interests of this country, I beg to move that "the words of the present Resolution be omitted."

MR. SPEAKER said, the question before the House, is whether the House will agree to the proposed Resolution. If the noble Lord intends to oppose the Resolution, his proper course will be simply to negative the Resolution.

THE MARQUESS OF WORCESTER: I beg, then, to state, that I shall give a most decided negative to the present Resolution.

MR. H. HINDE certainly had expected that, after the noble Lord had stated his objections to the course of the Government, some Member of the Treasury bench would have risen to explain the reasons which induced the Government to propose so great an alteration in the duties on timber. It could hardly be that they underrated its importance, or that, having established the general principles of free trade, they felt that they could not omit this particular article. He would rather have postponed the remarks he wished to make until after the explanation of the Minister had been given; but he did not wish the House to go to a division without stating the grounds

upon which he intended to oppose the Resolution. He had had the misfortune to differ from the Government in all the reductions they had made. He believed that the scheme of the Government, though it might be well-intentioned, would prove a futile attempt to promote the general welfare by inflicting an injury upon every interest in detail. Her Majesty's Government prided themselves upon being supported in this Resolution by the shipowners of the country; but he really did not see why such weight should be attached to the opinion of those shipowners, when upon a former occasion they had petitioned the House to an exactly opposite effect. It might perhaps be, that change of opinion without cause assigned found favour with Her Majesty's Government. A fellow-feeling made men wondrous kind; and a close sympathy might exist between a changeable Government and the changeable petitioners. He did not dispute the respectability of the shipowners who had signed the petitions in favour of this Resolution; but the House was under a very wrong impression if they supposed that the petitioners represented the general feeling of the whole body of shipowners. He did not presume himself to say what was the feeling of the whole body of shipowners; but this he did say, that those who had petitioned in favour of the reduction of duties formed a very small part of the entire shipping interest. The Government, however, were labouring under a great error if they supposed that these petitioners had become disciples of free trade. It was no such thing. They considered themselves as the first victims of free trade; they had for years suffered from its effects; and they had not obtained the sympathy of their fellow countrymen. They, therefore, had felt the not unnatural desire that others should be treated in the same manner as that in which they had been treated. He would refer to two passages from the petition presented the other night with great pomp by the right hon. Baronet from the shipowners of Sunderland. The right hon. Baronet would have exercised a sounder discretion if he had not moved that the petition be printed; for though its prayer was in his favour, its reasoning was against him. The petition stated that since the reciprocity treaties they had been unprotected; and that, therefore, they did not think themselves called upon to support protection to others. They did not deny that protection to some interests was ne-

cessary; but they felt the not unnatural desire to retaliate upon others for the treatment they had themselves received. The change, in the opinion of these petitioners, had been more recent even than that of the right hon. Gentlemen; for he was convinced that last January every one of them would have signed a petition with an opposite prayer. The right hon. Baronet had laid upon the Table certain Returns to show that the prosperity of the shipping interest had been increased by the Tariff of 1842; but never had Papers more woefully disappointed the object of their producer. He would not trouble the House with any other figures than those taken from the Papers of the right hon. Baronet himself. He would take a series of years, both before and after the Tariff, and show the effect which the Tariff had had upon the prosperity of the timber trade. First, with regard to British tonnage, his figures would show that instead of an increase caused by the operation of the Tariff, the previous regular progressive increase had fallen off since 1842. In the two years preceding 1842, the increase of British shipping had been 621,881 tons, or at the rate of $21\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. per annum. But, in 1843, the shipping amounted to 3,619,000 tons; and in 1844, to 3,637,000 tons; the increase having only been 17,381 tons, or $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Thus, the remarkable fact was, that whereas for the two years preceding the alteration in the Tariff the rate of increase in our shipping had been $21\frac{1}{2}$ per cent; for the two years following that alteration, the rate of increase had only been $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. He would now call attention to the Returns of entries inwards and outwards, of British and foreign vessels, engaged in our foreign and colonial trade, in 1832 and 1845, which were as follows:—

	TONS.
1832 British vessels entered inwards	1,936,846
— Foreign	561,047
1845 British	3,669,853
— Foreign	1,353,739

It hence appeared that the British tonnage inwards had increased during this period, 1,733,000 tons; while the foreign tonnage had advanced by 791,688 tons. The increase in the British shipping thus had been only at the rate of 90 per cent.; while the increase in the foreign shipping had been at the rate of 140 per cent. In 1838 the British tonnage was to the foreign as $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 1; in 1845 it was, as compared with the foreign only, as less than 2 to 1. The

Returns of vessels cleared outwards presented a similar result, being as follows:—

1832 British vessels cleared outwards	1,637,993 tons.
— Foreign	466,333 "
1843 British	2,947,257 "
— Foreign	1,361,940 "

Hence it appeared that the British shipping cleared outwards during this period had increased by 310,000 tons; while the foreign shipping had increased by 895,000 tons. The former had increased only at the rate of 80 per cent.; the foreign at the rate of more than 190 per cent. In 1832 the British tonnage cleared outwards had been to the foreign as three to one; in 1845, it was to the foreign only as less than one and a half to one. There had certainly been an increase in the British tonnage during this period to a considerable amount. But then it should be borne in mind that our trade had at that time been greatly extended; and what he was arguing was, that British shipping had not had its fair share in the carriage of the augmented amount of merchandise. The figures he had quoted, however, though their result was lamentable enough, did not by any means display the full extent of the unfortunate truth on this subject; for in the accounts of British vessels and tonnage entered both inwards and outwards, were included large numbers and amounts for steam vessels, which carried but small cargoes, and the number of whose voyages caused them to form a most undue proportion of the whole. In 1841, the whole number of steam vessels belonging to the United Kingdom was 791; tonnage 95,796 tons; and in that year there were "entered outwards" 17,318 steam vessels, the tonnage of which were represented at the enormous amount of 3,264,000 tons! So that these 791 steam vessels, by the frequent repetition of their respective voyages, were swelled into an apparent aggregate of upwards of 17,000; and their united tonnage figured at the astounding total of more than 3,000,000 tons. Such was the nature and value of the returns relied on by the Government on the subject. He trusted he had said enough to show, that it was not because the ship-owners had flourished under the free-trade measures, that they now petitioned the House to proceed in a similar course of legislation; but it was because they believed that for them free trade had done its worst, and because they hoped that by its more general application to other classes—

however those other interests might be injuriously affected—some benefit might ultimately result to their own interest. True, timber would be cheaper by the Government measure; and it might be imagined that the shipowner would have an interest in that cheapness. It had been stated that the amount of duty paid for timber used in shipbuilding, formed only five per cent. of the entire amount imported. When he had recently read that statement, he was met by a cheer, the import of which he understood to be this: that though the shipowner would not benefit by having foreign and colonial timber cheapened, he would benefit by having the price of home timber reduced. If the shipowner did so benefit, it was obviously at the expense of the producer at home. But what encouragement would there be to the raising of supplies of timber at home, fitted for the shipbuilding of this country? And in the prospect of a war particularly, would it be wise, or prudent, or politic, to be dependent on foreign States for the requisite supply of so vital and essential an element in our maritime and commercial greatness? The ground, however, on which perhaps the determination of the Government to reduce the discriminatory duties on timber was most to be regretted, was on account of the effect which this policy would have on our relations with our Colonies. He had heard with approbation the sentiment expressed by the Government, as to their determination, on the part of this country, to maintain a firm attitude in respect to the United States on the Oregon question. But he believed, if this measure were carried, not only would it be unnecessary on our behalf to contest the Oregon territory, but that we might safely make a present of Canada to the United States at once. It would appear that Ministers were actuated almost by hostile feelings towards our Colonies. The Government had already, by their Corn Law measure, proposed to take away the advantage given to Canada so recently as 1842, in respect to the importation of Canadian corn, and appeared really to have conferred that boon upon the Colony entirely for the wanton pleasure of immediately withdrawing it. The benefit which Canada had derived from the Corn Law discriminations between her grain and that of foreign countries had not been inconsiderable. Great quantities of Canadian corn had, within the last two years, been imported into this country, and 1,500,000 cwt. of Canadian manufactured flour. This

important and increasing trade it was proposed now suddenly to destroy; and, simultaneously with that, to ruin the timber trade of this Colony. He deeply regretted that the Government should have been betrayed into such a course of policy. Still more deeply should he regret to see the House betrayed into an approval of it. He was reluctant to obtrude further upon their attention, but would, ere he sat down, venture to propose one question, which, he hoped, any Gentleman who might rise on the part of the Government would attempt to answer, namely, "If we carried out free trade to its full extent, of what use would be our Colonies?" He knew it had often been asserted on the benches opposite, that our Colonies were incumbrances; but he little expected ever to hear such a doctrine propounded on the part of Ministers, still less to find it carried into operation in their measures. But of this he was sure, that such measures must inevitably lead to such results as that the Colonies must become eventually a burden only, and not a benefit. For these reasons he should cordially support the proposition of the noble Lord.

MR. CARDWELL said, that his hon. Friend who had just sat down, commenced his observations by recommending to the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government, a course which would have evinced much sounder discretion than moving that the petition from the ship-owners should be printed; and he went on to say that these petitioners had changed their opinions, and that he believed that if they were asked to sign a petition, before the present measure had been announced to Parliament, they would have retained their former opinions, and would have signed a petition quite in opposition to the present measure. Why, did not his hon. Friend perceive that if gentlemen largely engaged in the shipping interests had changed their opinions, and had come forward solemnly to record that change of opinion, did he not see that everybody must necessarily attach increased force to that statement from a change in their opinions? If that had been done by gentlemen, not from their own convictions, but because Her Majesty's Government had announced the measure, did he not perceive the natural conclusion which that change led to? Did he not perceive how great the confidence must be on the part of those commercial gentlemen in those who proposed this measure, if on no better ground they thought it worth while to come forward in

the face of Parliament and the country to withdraw opinions which on former occasions they had solemnly recorded? Let him ask his hon. Friend, before he advised sounder discretion to Her Majesty's Ministers, what he would think of the discretion of an hon. Gentleman, who, being entrusted with a different petition, moved that it be printed, when that petition contained a statement of this kind? Referring to 1842 it said, that petitions were presented to the Government and the Legislature by these very same parties, then, as now, purporting to be persons connected and conversant with the shipping interest. It recites that by those parties it was then universally contended, that the reduction of the discriminating duty to 25s. would eventually cause a transfer of a considerable portion of the timber trade from the Colonies to the timber-growing countries in the north of Europe. Another statement contained in it was, that the Shipowners' Association of Liverpool were of opinion that a reduction of discriminating duty on foreign timber to below 30s. was absolutely inconsistent with the shipping interests engaged in the Colonial timber trade. It also stated that it was indisputable that any reduction of the duty on foreign timber below 25s. would have disastrous effects on British navigation, while many contemplated most injurious consequences if it were reduced below 30s.; and some were apprehensive of dangerous results unless the duty of 45s. was exacted. Now, these Gentlemen set forth these opinions as having been the opinions on which they insisted in 1842; they candidly admitted that not one of these expectations had been in the smallest degree verified, while all their experience in the interval had been on the opposite side. And what did they conclude by saying? Why, they manfully avowed that notwithstanding their experience, in spite of the facts, they stoutly adhered to their opinions. And this was the petition which, in the exercise of his discretion, his hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle had moved for and had printed with the Votes. Now, without meaning any disrespect to them, or his hon. Friend, he would submit to the House and the country whether, on their own evidence, the balance of sound discretion would be found in favour of them and his hon. Friend, or in favour of those who, concurrently with experience and in deference to facts, thought fit to change their opinions, and of the right hon. Baronet (Sir R.

Peel), who had been entrusted with their petition, which he thought sufficiently remarkable to be entitled to the special notice of the House of Commons. What was the evidence on which they altered their opinions? His hon. Friend said that these shipowners being the first victims of free trade, came forward with their petition for the purpose of saving others from a similar calamity. The shipowners the victims of free trade! His hon. Friend invented all sorts of reasons why the House should not draw from the change of tonnage from 1844 to 1845, which amounted to nearly a million tons, the obvious inference to which it was entitled. His hon. Friend argued that because British vessels had increased at a lower rate than others, that was a proof of the decline of our trade. Why, what a rule by which to institute comparison! If a man who had only one ship bought another, he increased his number 100 per cent.; the owner of one hundred vessels must buy to the number of two hundred before he could have a proportionate increase to the other. We had increased between 900,000 and 1,000,000 tons; while in the aggregate all foreign ships had increased between 300,000 and 400,000. He was now speaking from an official account of the number of British and foreign vessels entered inwards and outwards in the respective years. They had increased from 974,392 tons in 1842, to 1,353,735 in 1845; and we from 2,680,838 to 3,669,853. The same paper gave the number of vessels, and of the men employed in navigating them; and the increase in the number of vessels which belonged to the various ports of the British Empire, was from 30,815 in 1842, to 31,320 in 1844. The calculation was not made for 1845; and, therefore, he was not in a condition to carry out the comparison; but, looking at the amount of tonnage, he was enabled to state that a very remarkable increase had taken place. With respect to Canadian timber, his hon. Friend asked of what value on earth the Colonies would be if this measure was passed; and said that when it was carried, and Canada ruined, we might make a present of Canada to any one who would accept it. When we had ruined Canada, his hon. Friend's proposition might be correct; but let the House consider whether we had ruined Canada. He found that in 1841—the last year of the old high duty—the amount of duty received was 450,000*l*. Now, allowing a proportionate deduction for the dimi-

nution of the duty, the amount ought to have fallen to 45,000*l*.; but instead of that the duty was—

In 1843	£68,000
In 1844	71,000
In 1845	94,000

so that the whole trade in timber with Canada had been more than doubled when the difference between the 10*s*. and the 1*s*. duty was considered. He thought, therefore, that the Government might put off making a present of Canada until the sound discretion of his hon. Friend was equal to the sound discretion of those whom he undertook to advise. The Chairman of the Liverpool Dock Committee had recently stated, "It had been represented that the timber trade of that port had declined; and that it had, at all events, reached its maximum, and would not increase. One fact alone exhibited, at least, its vast importance, viz., that there had been more artificers employed in its different department in this country during the last eighteen years, than in any other trade;" and then he proceeded to give the following statement of the number of vessels employed in Liverpool in the timber trade with British America:—

1838	305 vessels	100,000 tons.
1842	165 "	91,000 "
1845	453 "	239,000 "

A similar statement was given as to the numbers of "pieces" of timber imported:—

1838	15,000,000
1842	9,000,000
1845	28,000,000

So much for Canadian shipping in the timber trade—for the tonnage of vessels, for the number of men, for the quantity of timber—so much, in the very years which his hon. Friend had selected for his comparison, for the ruin of colonial interests, and the destruction of the intercolonial trade. Well, but with all this increase of colonial import—with an admitted increase also of import from the Baltic—what had been the effect upon the price of oak at home? His hon. Friend who sat beside him, the Member for Lewes, had furnished him from the Admiralty with an account of contract prices. Referring to the contracts for English oak, he found the results to be as follows:—

March, 1833	} Same prices all round.
February, 1844	
February, 1840	
1841	} 15 per cent. added to the foregoing.
1842 and to	
March, 1843	

December, 1843	{ Reduction of 15 percent. on timber, plank, and tree-nails; $7\frac{1}{2}$ on thick stuff.
January, 1846	{ Increase of 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ on 1843. Same as 1840—1842. 15 percent. above 1833.

Now, if the legislation of that House was based upon evidence of facts, he should like to know what facts would in future be relied upon when a case was to be made out against the reduction of the timber duties? A Committee of that House which sat in 1835, reported that the duty then imposed by law on timber the produce of Europe, as compared with timber the produce of our North American Colonies, was too great, and might be reduced; and they further stated it to be their opinion that, having due regard to the interests that had been created in British North America, a reduction of the protective duty not exceeding 15s. per load appeared to them to be a fair arrangement. That proposition was not successful then; but in 1842 a greater reduction of protective duty had been made. And had they not witnessed with satisfaction the result? Different kinds of timber were used for different purposes—for different parts, for example, of a house or of a ship. As you increased the supply of large timbers, you stimulated the demand for the planking; just as the consumption of timber operated upon the Excise by enhancing the demand for bricks. Thus while you increased the demand for labour, you cheapened the materials requisite to furnish for the people comfortable dwellings. Experience had shown that there was no reason why they might not take measures to increase the consumption of Baltic timber, and at the same time double the consumption of Canadian timber. Fortified by the facts which he had stated, he would venture to set up his own authority against that of his hon. Friend, confident that no such evidence could be brought against his predictions as he had produced in opposition to the views of his hon. Friend; and with a confidence not at all shaken by his hon. Friend's statements, he should ask the House to agree to the Resolutions.

Mr. H. HINDE explained, that in the return to which he had referred in relation to the steam vessels, the number of ships were not given, so that the remarkable apparent excess in the shipping was (notwithstanding the hon. Gentleman's attempted explanation) still referrible to the frequent voyages of the steamers included in the returns. He further wished to state

that the question he had asked of the Government (and which the hon. Member had not attempted to answer) was, "If free trade were carried out fully, giving to other countries all the commercial benefits enjoyed by our Colonies—and we had thus all the burdens of our Colonies without being enabled to derive any advantage therefrom—what would be the good of our Colonies?"

Mr. A. CHAPMAN said, having sat on every maritime or mercantile Committee of that House for the last thirty years, and having had more communication with the shipping interest than most Members (besides his own personal connexion with it), he ventured to express his opinions on the subject, in which he had acquired some considerable practical experience. It had formerly been the policy of the British Government to encourage the enterprise of our own subjects and colonists, with the view of securing sure supplies of the great necessities of commerce, especially timber; and under the protection conferred, with this object, on our Colonial produce, large establishments had been raised, and much capital invested with a view to obtaining supplies from our own Colonies. For his own part, he should be happy to see timber coming in from the east and from the west, proportioned to the demand; but he feared lest the effect of transferring the timber trade from our Colonies to other countries should be to injure that important interest—the shipping of this country. He had apprehended, at the time of Mr. Huskisson's measure, and still more when the recent changes in the Tariff took place, that such timber-growing countries as Norway might attract much of our timber trade; and he found that though a few years ago only fifteen Norwegian vessels, with a tonnage of 1,131 tons, visited this country, last year there were 1,127 vessels, with a tonnage of 170,000 tons. Mr. Deacon Hume had, in his evidence before the Import Duties Committee (whence much of the new doctrine on these subjects had emanated), stated that he would not mind if all the ships engaged in the Canada timber trade were destroyed, as the effect would be to benefit the revenue by directing the trade from Canada with low duties to the Baltic with high duties. It might be imagined that with views like these, those who were connected with the shipping interest of this country could have no sympathy. There was no doubt that timber could not be smuggled. He really thought it was a

fair subject for taxation, and it was a tax of which no man complained. He believed there was a great increase in the timber trade, which was owing, in some measure, to the large number of our railways; and in the expectation of much being required, there was at the present time in Liverpool, a greater quantity of timber than had been known for many years. He thought the extent and improvement of the trade were reasons why the House, in the course it was about to pursue, should be extremely careful not to injure the maritime trade of the country.

CAPTAIN HARRIS, as a naval Member of that House, begged to make some observations upon the subject now before it. He believed that if this measure was carried, a heavy blow would be struck against the North American trade with this country. There was no occasion for him to call the attention of the Government to the maritime interest. He had ever observed that this interest had met with the most careful consideration. He should at once proceed to the facts upon which his opinion, with regard to the present measure, was formed. He would not attempt to detract from the cheering account of that trade which had been laid before the House. He had stated on a former occasion that he believed the Tariff to have worked most usefully for the country. But he must say that he also believed that the greatest amount of protection that could be given, ought to be given both to our colonial and native industry. He hoped, therefore, the Government would not reduce the timber duty, as had been proposed. He would ask, whether, in the face of the evidence given in the Report of that Committee of British Shipowners, which sat in the year 1844, the Government would consent to lower those duties? He had not been able to arrive at the number of ships employed in the Canadian trade, but he did not think he should be over-rating them in stating them to be 1,200, and the men employed about 15,000. It was a very good school and nursery for our seamen. When he commanded a man-of-war on the North American station, he had completed his crew with first-rate seamen at the port of Quebec. There were upwards of 200 men there on an average at all times ready to enter our naval service. But it was not only this—we risked the loss of our Colonies. He would remind the House that the exports of this country to those Colonies were about 3,000,000; and those

Colonies had no time allowed them to petition the House on the subject of these measures. He would call their attention to that fact, and remind them that on the last occasion when the timber duties were altered, there were several petitions presented to that House from New Brunswick and our other North American Colonies. He felt bound, therefore, to oppose the measure.

MR. G. PALMER said, that the question before the House appeared to him to be of vital importance—it concerned an interest which had been attacked by the free traders. But the present measure was fraught with much mischief to every interest of the country, more particularly, however, to the shipping interest. He should endeavour to show to the House, that in no one instance had it been beneficial. The right hon. Baronet might not have all the responsibility on his shoulders of the evil that would attend the passing of this measure, although he seemed as if he were jealous of the noble Lord opposite in taking the credit of it. He recollected on one occasion calling upon the House to look into the condition which the country had attained under the navigation laws. She had given laws to all the Continent. He had called upon the House to consider whether these laws were not the source of all our prosperity; and the answer was that all these things were gained by the peculiar energy of the country in spite of bad laws. He thought that the right hon. Baronet stood in the light of Ahab's prophets of old: he would deceive himself, and bring down destruction upon a devoted people: his own conviction upon the subject of the navigation laws had never been changed: had the country come to this, that they were to cast away the bread of their children to strangers? Had the time come when the lion and the lamb were about to lie down together in this country? He did not know whether the right hon. Baronet took credit to himself for being one or the other. When any individual took up a new theory he would lend himself to nothing but that which would carry out his own purpose; and perhaps it was not extraordinary the right hon. Baronet had done that. The House had heard the other night a statement of the effects which these new measures would have upon the silk trade: he could assure the right hon. Baronet that such was also the case with the shipowners of this country upon the passing of the navigation laws: he had himself sold ships for 5,000*l.* which cost

originally 20,000l.: he hoped he should not be considered as saying anything personally offensive to the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government; but he could not help thinking that the right hon. Gentleman had been acting in an ungenerous manner towards the House and towards the country in making the returns now before that House. Whatever was stated at the Table ought not only to be literally but substantially correct, and then the deductions would be equally correct. He thought that as the population of any country increased, so the means of conveyance from one place to another must necessarily increase. From the year 1820 to 1844 the increase of population was twenty-eight per cent. He would state what had been the increase in shipping. In the year 1820 the number of vessels was 21,969; in the year 1840 the number amounted to 21,983; and in 1844 there were 23,283 vessels, showing an increase since 1840 of 1,300 vessels. He thought, however, that it was necessary for the House to look with considerable doubt upon these returns. They had been made up by the introduction of a large number of steam vessels. The 30s. duty which had already been taken off timber, had gone into the pockets of the foreigner. The freight, which had been 14s. was now 21s., and therefore the foreigner now received not only 30s. for the original price of timber, but also received the original freight. He believed the present measure would entirely shut the British ships out of the Baltic trade; and was not the Baltic timber preferable to the Canadian timber? And he would appeal to any naval officer to say whether the Baltic trade was not of all others the one most calculated to make British seamen? Men might go three or four voyages across the Atlantic without receiving half the experience which they would acquire from a voyage to the Baltic. He was quite sure the time would eventually come when every hon. Member of that House would see the evil consequences that must result from the present measure. It had been stated, in allusion to a petition which had been presented against this measure, that counter petitions had been brought from different parts of their country: he believed there were no names in those petitions of persons connected in the smallest degree with the general shipping trade: they were engaged in the local trade only. The measure now before the House affected every interest, and not merely a

single class. The public, he repeated, were deeply concerned in it. The principle proposed was a novel, a great and a grand principle—its application was quite another thing. It was nothing less than the withdrawal of the protection of the State from her own inhabitants—it was an abandonment of a doctrine which they had hitherto been taught should exist between the parent and the child, the master and the servant, the State and the subject. They were now about to establish the theory of buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest markets—a theory very freely entertained and insisted upon by men who were not very scrupulous as to the mode in which they obtained property; but not, he thought, worthy of adoption by a great country like this, which had grown into power and prosperity by different means. That hackneyed language of “class interests,” used by hon. Gentlemen opposite, was not at all applicable—they talked very freely of “monopoly,” but he knew of no monopoly in the invidious sense which they used the term. If it meant the fact of a great body being engaged in one particular calling, who were anxious to maintain their own rights—why, then he thought that, so far from discountenancing them, the Ministry was bound to consult their interests, for it was the individual interest which created public interest; the country had chartered such monopolies, and chartered them to their own advantage. Look, for instance, at the East India Company. It was open to every individual in this country to buy and sell as best he might; in that respect there was perfect free trade. The foreigner too ought to be treated with, but on terms of reciprocity; not the sort of bargain which we made with Prussia, giving all the advantage to that kingdom. We ought to get a *quid pro quo*. At the same time that he was anxious for friendly intercourse with all countries, he could not wish to encourage that intercourse at the expense of his own, nor to confer an advantage on one portion of the community which might be ruinous to another.

MR. WARBURTON, having been at a former period of his life connected with the timber trade, wished to take that opportunity of complimenting Her Majesty's Government on the great improvements that they had already effected, and were now effecting in that trade. Formerly all deals paid the same amount of duty, no matter what their dimensions might be. Thus a

deal seven feet long, nine inches wide, and one and a half inches thick, paid the same duty as a deal sixteen feet long, three inches thick, and eleven inches wide. The Government were, however, at length induced to abolish this absurd distinction; and since 1842 deals were allowed to be introduced at a rate of duty varying according to their cubic dimensions. He would beg to draw the attention of the House for a moment to the effect of the differential duty between Colonial and European timber, as settled by the Tariff of 1842. Prior to that period this duty had been 45s.: but in 1842 it was reduced to 25s. by Her Majesty's Government. On converting the returns which had been previously entered by tale, and in the case of deals by great hundreds, into cubic dimensions, and comparing the quantities imported from the Colonies and from European countries, as laid on the Table by the right hon. Baronet, he found the following results:—The quantity of deals imported for home consumption into the United Kingdom in 1841 and 1842, from the Colonies, was 51,412 great hundreds, which, allowing $6\frac{1}{2}$ loads to each, was equivalent to 334,178 loads. To this was to be added 632,184 loads of hewn timber, and 7,989 masts entered by tale. On comparing this return with that for the last year, he found that the total quantity, both of deals and of hewn timber, increased from 782,341 loads, payable according to the old duties in 1841 and 1842, to 1,290,341 in 1845, giving an increase of about 30 per cent. although the differential duty in favour of colonial timber had been reduced in that period from 45s. to 25s. a load. Now, he would look to the effect of this reduction on the foreign timber trade. The quantity of foreign deals imported in 1841 and 1842, including those entered by tale, was 321,400 loads, or thereabouts, which, added to the quantity of hewn timber imported, made in all 505,803 loads. That amount had increased in 1845 to 675,840 loads, showing the increase since the reduction of duty to be only about 20 per cent. on the imports of foreign timber. So that taking the average imports of 1841 and 1842, and comparing them with the imports for the past year, they had this fact, that while the increase on the colonial timber trade, notwithstanding the reduction in duty was 30 per cent. the increase on European timber was no more than 20 per cent. But it was right, in the next place, to look to the prices which the shippers of

timbers in the colonial and in European ports had been able to realize. In 1841 and 1842, the prices realized by the Colonies on the yellow or Weymouth pine timbers were in 1841, 66s. a load, and in 1842, 56s. a load, leaving the average price about 51s. a load. In 1845 the price realized in the Colonies on yellow pine was 69s., showing a considerable improvement on the price since the reduction of the protecting duty. He would next take the price of that species of timber which approached most nearly in quality to the European pine, namely, the red pine hewn timber, and he found that, while the price realized in the Colonies in 1841 and 1842 was 83s. a load, the price realized in 1845 was as high as 81s. a load, or very nearly what it had been before the protecting duty had been lowered. In European hewn timber the price in 1841 and 1842 was 46s. a load, and in 1845 it was 53s. a load, showing a very considerable improvement. In 1841 and 1842 the prices realized on foreign deals were 57s. and 53s., making an average of about 55s., and in 1845 the price was raised to 66s. a load; but, at the same time, the price of colonial timber, of the same quality, which in 1841 and 1842 was about 70s. a load, was in 1845, 68s. a load, or very nearly the same, although the differential duty had been in the interim diminished to the extent of 20s. sterling per load. He was, therefore, justified in saying that all the anticipations that had been put forward in 1842 by the shipping and colonial interests of the ruinous consequences of the proposed reductions had been falsified, as the colonial timber now realized the identical prices which it bore before the reduction, and, as far as yellow timber was concerned, had actually advanced 17 or 18 per cent. in price. But this was only one part of the question. An important consideration was, whether, considering the immense increase in the consumption of the country, caused by the construction of railways and other improvements, the Government were now to stand still and give the entire benefit of the additional demand to the Colonies, and thus raise the price on the consumer to an enormous amount. The enormous increase in the consumption of timber in 1845, as compared with 1841 and 1842, afforded a fair indication of the additional percentage which was likely to take place in the price of colonial timber, were the European timber countries to be precluded from competing with the Colonies on more equi-

table terms. He thought the Government had done quite right: first, in abolishing the mode of fixing the differential duty so as to leave the same amount payable on the smallest and on the largest sized deals; and in the next place, by giving additional facilities for preventing the price of timber being raised to an enormous amount on the consumer, as it would undoubtedly be raised unless these additional facilities were afforded. It was contended that an injury would be done to the British shipping interest by the change; but it should not be forgotten that they had improved the condition of the British shipowner in other respects. As long as they had a sliding scale in the corn trade, it was necessary for the importer of foreign corn to make the shipments in the greatest possible hurry, in order that he might get it into the market while the duty was low. He was consequently obliged to make use of foreign bottoms in his importations to a very considerable extent. The Government, by opening the corn trade, would remove this evil, and afford the British shipowners the advantage of this trade. But there were other considerations besides those which related to the mere trade view of the question, which would make it imperative on the Government not to put a ban on the timber trade of the north of Europe. The American timber trade grew out of the two expeditions to Copenhagen; the timber trade with Europe having received its quietus in 1808. Before that period there was scarcely a Norwegian captain who did not wear a medal won by serving in the British navy; and almost all the best seamen that were to be found in the Norwegian navy had, in consequence of high wages and other inducements, previously served in the navy of this country. In 1807, however, the Government seized all the Norwegian ships in the British ports, and sent the poor captains to the various depôts of prisoners in this country, and the blow then struck was followed by the total destruction of the Norwegian timber trade before the end of the war. He thought it behoved this country to consider whether a nation having so large a trade as Norway, and possessing as it did some of the finest ports in the world along its coast, should not be encouraged rather than impeded to carry on trade with us. When they had formerly put a ban on the timber trade with Norway, an immense trade sprung up between that country and France; and it was for the British Government to

consider whether they would drive the trade of a country having so large a mercantile navy as Norway altogether into the hands of France—knowing, as they did, that in such a case they could not expect the support of the Norwegian seamen, which they once before enjoyed, should a great European war again break forth; and no matter how much they might depend on an extensive impressment system, such a consideration was not to be lost sight of. Considering the great aggressive power which Norway possessed in the northern parts of the world, there were, he thought, strong political reasons for restoring and cementing the connexion which existed between that country and England before the war of 1798, independent altogether of the important commercial reasons to which he had before alluded. Another fact not to be lost sight of was, the success attending the reduction already made by the Government in the timber duties, as a financial arrangement. The revenue derived from timber in 1841-2 was—colonial 453,157*l.*; foreign 1,117,422*l.*; making a total of 1,570,579*l.*; while, in 1845, it was—colonial 94,262*l.*; foreign 945,345*l.*; total 1,039,607*l.*—thus showing that the duty on foreign timber, though reduced 45 per cent., had yielded 85 per cent. of its former amount of revenue; while in colonial timber the duty, which had been reduced from 10*s.* to 1*s.* a load, or 10 per cent., produced 20 per cent. of its former amount. The measure of the Government was, therefore, as successful in a financial as in a commercial and political point of view.

Mr. BORTHWICK agreed with the hon. Gentleman who had just sat down as to the propriety of cultivating friendly intercourse with Norway; but he thought there was a still stronger reason for encouraging friendly relations with Canada. The hon. Gentleman said this was a shipowners' question. He protested against its being considered a question of shipowners or of any other class. It was the vice of the new measure that the great masses of the people which it affected were considered as classes having separate interests. It was not in his view either a colonial or a shipowners' question, but an Imperial question. As the hon. Gentleman had alluded to the prices of timber, he too would quote figures respecting our colonial and foreign timber trade. In 1841 the price of Canadian timber was 4*l.* 10*s.* per load; in 1846, 4*l.* 10*s.* The

price of European timber was in 1841, 5*l.*, in 1846, 5*l.* Who, therefore, benefited by the reduction of duty made in 1842? It was quite clear it was not the British consumer. The hon. Gentleman pointed out the way in which the market was ready to absorb this increased importation, and alluded to the increase of railway enterprise since 1842. This might satisfactorily account for the price which timber had maintained; but would this demand be perpetual? The freight of American timber, and the cost of importation, was just double that of European on an average. In 1841 the selling price of Baltic timber in this country was 5*l.* per load, so that after duty, freight, and other charges, it was computed that the foreign grower pocketed 1*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.* In the same year, in the Canada trade, matters stood thus:—

Freight	£2 0 0
Charges	0 5 0
Duty	0 10 0
The selling price was	4 10 0

The Canadian grower was enabled, from the differential duty, to pocket 1*l.* 15*s.*, the difference being as between 1*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.* and 1*l.* 15*s.* in favour of the colonial grower. The Tariff of 1842 reduced the differential duty to 1*l.* 5*s.* The importation of timber from the Baltic at present was:—

Freight	£1 2 0
Duty	1 5 0
Charges	0 2 6

It sold at 5*l.*, thus putting 2*l.* 10*s.* into the pocket of the European grower. As regarded Canadian timber, the following was the cost of importation at present:—

Freight	£2 2 0
Charges	0 7 0
Duty	0 1 0

Leaving for the original cost 2*l.* as it sold here at 4*l.* 10*s.* The relative difference between the European grower and the Canadian grower in 1841, was as 1*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.* to 1*l.* 15*s.*; the difference then was in favour of Canadian; but now it was in favour of the Baltic grower. It was clear that whatever benefit others might have received, two classes had certainly not been benefited—the British consumer, who still paid the same price, and the Canadian producer, who came into the British market at a disadvantage of 10*s.* as compared with 1841. The causes to which the late high prices of timber were ascribed were admitted to be of a temporary nature. It could not be expected that the making of railways could be always carried on as they had been; there must be a limit to those

works, and, consequently, to the demand for timber which they occasioned; but be it recollected, the Government measure was permanent, and made no allowance for a decrease in demand. Then the employment of seamen, which was greater from the length of voyage in the Canadian than in the Baltic trade, was a consideration which ought not to be overlooked in their calculations. If this measure were carried into effect, the price of Baltic timber in the English market would be 3*l.* The Canadian timber was 10 per cent. less in market value than the foreign timber, while the charges were higher, and if the Canadian grower were compelled to sell at the same sum of 3*l.*, he would sustain a loss of 8*s.*, which would drive him out of the market altogether. If these calculations were correct—and he knew they were—the effect of this measure would simply be, not merely to discourage but to annihilate in the market of this country the sale of Canadian timber. Three years ago, they had altered the Corn Laws in favour of Canada. But now, simultaneously with this destructive measure to their timber trade, they had equalised the duties on corn, so that our Canadian Colonies were to be placed precisely on the same footing as the United States. It seemed to him that the whole of these measures were based upon an erroneous principle—upon a principle which brought upon a footing of equality the subjects of all foreign Crowns with the subjects of the Crown of Great Britain; and if there were no other circumstances to make a difference between the two, this principle might very safely be adopted. If they would insure constant peace; if they would equalise the taxation of this country with the taxation of foreign countries; if England were but a second-rate power in the family of nations; if they were not responsible for the welfare of distant Colonies, largely and densely populated; if with the nationality of England there were not connected the advance of a high state of civilization—these measures of free trade might be applicable to our condition, and might be carried into effect with perfect safety. But, when they found the contrary of all this to be the case, and with respect to the measure more immediately under their consideration, that it affected the interest, first of the Canadian producer, and next of the shipping trade of the country, he must give them his opposition. The greatness of this country depended

upon the superiority of its navy, and its naval supremacy depended upon the colonial trade, which afforded the best and almost the only nursery for our seamen. But by these measures which were now introduced, they were likely to injure both the shipping interest and the prosperity of the Colonies. The hon. Member for Kendal had attempted to show that the reduction of duty had increased the demand; but every one knew that the increased demand for timber arose from a course altogether unconnected with the reduction of duties. It arose from the extraordinary progress made in the construction of railways. He must apologize for detaining the House with these dry statements; but he did not think it well, in these times, when every vote was set down to a party purpose, that he should give his vote without explanation. He disclaimed being actuated by any other view in all the votes he gave, than an endeavour honestly to discharge his duty, and to do the best he could for all classes of Her Majesty's subjects.

MR. HENLEY could not agree with what had been stated by the hon. Member for Kendal, that the measures adopted with regard to timber during the last two or three years had involved no loss to the revenue; because they would find that the average amount of revenue derived from timber in the years 1840 to 1842 had amounted to between 1,300,000*l.* and 1,400,000*l.*; while he believed the average amount of revenue derived from the same source, during the subsequent three years of 1843, 1844, 1845, did not exceed 800,000*l.* or 900,000*l.*; thus showing a loss of 500,000*l.* a year. Besides, it ought to be observed, that during the last three years, there had been an extraordinary demand for timber caused by the construction of railways. On a question of this sort he should generally be disposed to leave it in the hands of Government; but he must say that the arguments which the hon. Gentleman the Secretary for the Treasury had put forth required something very like official assurance to propound to the House. He had told them that the reduction in the amount of duty had caused an increase in the demand for oak timber, such as was used for the purposes of the navy; and he had gone into some statements to prove this, which appeared to him to require as much official assurance to set forth to the House as when the right hon. Baronet attempted to make

them believe that the price of meat had risen in consequence of the introduction of foreign cattle; because the hon. Gentleman had forgotten that within these few years there had been an extraordinary expenditure for the naval estimates, that the navy estimates had lately been raised to six or seven millions sterling; and every one who examined the subject knew that this large sum was not expended in the increase of seamen, but in the increase of materials for shipbuilding. Now, it was well known that timber for naval purposes was so scarce that if Government went into the market and purchased to the extent of 100,000*l.* or so, up went the price directly. But he did not believe the hon. Gentleman would rise and tell the House that timber not used for shipbuilding purposes had so increased in price; if it had, he (Mr. Henley) was certainly not acquainted with it. He, therefore, thought it was not candid or fair in any Member of the Government to assign as the reasons for any statement, that which they themselves knew did not bear upon the point. But now he wished to make some observations upon the statements contained in the petitions presented to this House from the private bodies of shipowners, because he felt that this was a question deeply involving the mercantile marine of the country. He could not conceal from himself that on this occasion differences of opinion prevailed among the shipowners. He believed that a few years ago they were more unanimous than they were at present; he had, therefore, taken some pains to look into the reasons which those gentlemen who dissented from the general body of shipowners put forth; and he must say that it was a very singular position for them to take, because the shipowners were themselves a highly protected body, and must of necessity continue to be so. The right hon. Baronet, indeed, in the commencement of the Session, declared that he for one could no longer maintain the principle of protection; and, as often happened with a man when he was saying that which others had said before, and to which he had formerly been opposed, he went further even than those who consistently maintained the same principles. Thus, on the question of protection, all the best writers in favour of free trade admitted that it might do partial evil to the interests concerned, but that it would be for the general good; but the right hon. Gentleman went further than this, and challenged

the House to show that any individual interest had suffered from the extension of free trade. Now he (Mr. Henley) would in his turn challenge the right hon. Baronet to show that he really believed in the truth of his own assertion, by carrying out the principle to its full extent. At present foreign vessels were restricted from bringing to this country any produce except that which belonged to their own country; that is, a Swedish vessel could not bring here Russian produce, and *vice versa*. Now, why should that be allowed? Why should not the Lincolnshire agriculturist, seeing that all protection was to be taken from him, be allowed to employ a Dutch vessel to carry his produce to the London market? The freight would be cheaper than an English vessel, and, therefore, there would be so much gain to the agriculturist. Then why should not the West Indian produce be brought over to this country in the cheapest possible way? To be sure the right hon. Baronet proposed to continue protection to the West Indian interest. But the noble Lord opposite had given notice of his intention to oppose that course; and, of course, after the introduction of slave-grown Indian corn and slave-grown rice, no one could argue in favour of the exclusion of slave-grown sugar. That would be all cant, which the noble Lord would knock down as he would a ninepin. Why, then, should not sugar be brought to this country in foreign ships, the freights of which were one-third cheaper? So, also, with regard to sailors. The wages of foreign sailors were less than those of England; and if his proposition were adopted, the right hon. Baronet would then have an opportunity of descending upon the great improvement in the mercantile marine, upon the increased amount of tonnage, and the consequent national prosperity. He thought the right hon. Baronet was the more apt to take this view of the case, because he had invariably observed, that in every interest which the Government had touched, they had never, on any one occasion, gone into the condition of the operatives concerned in the measure. They had dwelt upon the increased quantities of consumption, and the increased amount of imports, all which might be perfectly true; but they had never touched upon the condition of the workmen. He apologized for detaining the House; but from personal reasons he felt a strong interest in this question; and he had not seen any arguments put forth

by the shipowners which in his humble judgment did not cut their own throats, because as sure as effect followed cause, so sure would the results of this measure be detrimental to them; and instead of gaining by it they would be exposed to much sharper competition than they suffered at the present moment.

Mr. HUME concurred in opinion with the hon. Gentleman, that if the agricultural interest was entirely freed from protection, it was only right that the shipowners should be placed in a similar situation, that they should have the power of buying in the cheapest market, and selling in the dearest; and he would support any proposition the hon. Member might bring forward for effecting that object. He (Mr. Hume) complained of the proposal now before the House, though on very different grounds from the hon. Gentleman who had just sat down. He complained that the duty was not entirely removed. He knew of no raw material which it was more important for the general interests of the community to render accessible at a cheap rate than timber; and, next to provisions, no article which, with reference to the erection of cheap and suitable dwellings, was more necessary to the comfort of the poor. He considered that the course of legislation hitherto pursued with regard to this article had been most objectionable; and he thought that the shipowners who concurred in opinion with the hon. Member who last spoke were acting against their own interests. The shipowners objected to reciprocity; and why? They said the materials with which they built their ships were much more expensive than the materials used in the construction of foreign ships. That was in consequence of the duty imposed upon foreign timber, which was now the only article used in the construction of ships subject to duty. In this country the construction of ships was more expensive by 5*l.* a ton than on the Continent; and a foreigner could build three ships with the same money with which an Englishman could build only two. The reduction of the timber duties would lessen the price of a ship's hull built in this country by one-half, or even perhaps two-thirds. Would this give no advantage to the shipowners? But, then, he might be told that, with respect to wages and the maintenance of seamen, the British shipowner could not compete with the foreigner. The expense of British seamen was certainly higher than that

of foreign sailors ; but this arose from the fact that English seamen obtained food of a much better class, and consequently of higher price, than foreign sailors. He was satisfied, however, that if the measure now before the House were adopted, the British shipowner would within five years be able to build ships at much less expense than at present, and the rate of freights would consequently be reduced. An English-built ship was always insured at a much lower premium than a foreign vessel. One of the effects of the present timber duties had been to drive shipbuilding from British ports to our Colonies, where vessels could be constructed much less expensively than at home. Yet no one would contend that the colonial ships were at all equal to British-built vessels ; they were sold at a cheap rate, but they were worn out in ten years, while a British-built ship would last twenty years or more. The effect, then, of the reduction of the timber duties, would be to restore the shipbuilding trade to this country. The disadvantages under which the English shipowners laboured might be classed under four heads : first, the cost of the hull and rigging, which if this measure were adopted could be completed as cheaply here, he believed, as in any part of the world ; secondly, the rate of wages, which would now be equalized ; thirdly, the price of provisions, in which there would now be a considerable reduction ; and, fourthly, the duties on insurance. He thought that the amount of duty on marine policies was very objectionable, though he admitted that it had been reduced ; but when men were put to run a race together, they ought to be equally loaded. The shipping interest had not the advantage of equal loading, though the course of their present legislation as far as it went was in the right direction. He recollected that in 1813 he declared at the India House that he hoped to see the amount paid for tonnage to India, which was then 50*l.* per ton, reduced to ten guineas, and his observation was only laughed at ; but he had lived to see the day when it was reduced to 7*l.* 10*s.*, or 7*l.*, which was considered remunerative. In consequence of the system of duties which had hitherto been maintained, British ships were inefficiently timbered, and the result was that more fishermen and seamen were drowned belonging to Britain than to any other country. Another lamentable result of the policy hitherto pursued on this subject was, that a large portion of the capital of

our shipowners was invested in Danish and Norwegian vessels, because ships could be built in Denmark and Norway so much cheaper than here. But the system now proposed by the right hon. Baronet, if carried out, would put an end to that evil, and British capital would be employed in British ports. He had been intrusted with a petition, which stated that it would be important to the health and comfort of the labouring classes, if they were enabled to obtain cheap dwelling-houses ; but that the existing high duties imposed on articles of consumption deprived them of that benefit. It was of the utmost importance that the working classes should have the means of obtaining cheap dwelling-houses. Hon. Gentlemen opposite had said a great deal about their desire to improve the condition of the working classes, and lengthy reports upon their sanitary condition had been laid upon the Table of that House, which showed the miserably unhealthy hovels which they were obliged to occupy—the fruitful cause of disease and death amongst the poor of this country. All that, however—the horrid air which they were compelled to breathe, and the pestilence which followed on it—were the consequences of the high duty upon timber and on bricks ; and he fearlessly asserted that every man who opposed the reduction of the duty upon those articles was contributing to maintain misery and disease amongst the working classes. Men who had been toiling their twelve or fourteen hours a day, ought to be enabled to occupy a place where they could at least breathe the wholesome air ; but instead of that the taxes of the country confined them to miserable, unhealthy hovels, where the fresh air never penetrated ; and when, in the course of time, they arrived at an age when they should be able to carry out their experience in surrounding themselves with small domestic comforts, they were fit only to be the inmates of a workhouse or an hospital. He wished most strongly to press the point of the dwellings of the poor of this country upon those who felt disposed to oppose the reduction of the duty upon timber. What, too, was the effect of these duties on the agriculturists themselves ? Every man knew that the expense attendant on the erection of buildings was an important item with the farmer. Who had tried American or home timber for this purpose, without finding that the whole of his labour and expense in the erection of buildings was thrown away, and that he was obliged at last to have recourse to

Baltic timber, if he wished to have durable constructions? Consequently, the measure which the agriculturists were now opposing would, if passed, enable them to construct their buildings with a more durable material. What, he asked, would be the effect of the proposed measure on all classes, and among others, on the manufacturers? He would say, take the duty off entirely, and put them on a footing to compete with all the world. Give protection to nobody. What was protection but the giving to some individuals the right of taxing their neighbours? Every protectionist put his hand into his neighbour's pocket indirectly; doing that which, if an unfortunate man did in the streets, he would be taken to Bow-street, and transported to Botany Bay. No measure connected with commercial reform was of more importance than the entire repeal of the duties on timber; and he could only account for the right hon. Baronet not taking the duties all off at the present moment, by supposing that the right hon. Baronet, in making so great a change as he had done, taking all his measures together, wished to see what the effect of those might be. He was confident that before another year elapsed the right hon. Baronet would see the importance of the total repeal of the timber duties, not merely to one class, but to all classes. He (Mr. Hume) should give his vote in favour of the reduction proposed by the Government, on the ground that timber was a raw material, and required by almost every class; and because he believed that the proposed reduction would be particularly beneficial to the working classes. At the same time, he expressed his regret that it had not been proposed to repeal the duties entirely and immediately.

LORD G. BENTINCK: In rising, Sir, to support the Amendment which has this night been brought forward with so much honesty of purpose, with so much ability, and with so much perspicuity by my noble Friend the Member for East Gloucestershire (the Marquess of Worcester), I am sure I am but uttering the sentiments of hon. Members, when I say that none could have listened to the observations which fell from that noble Member, and not have felt convinced he has given promise of eminence in future discussions of this House. I can assure the House that I should not have risen at a quarter past eleven the other night for the purpose of adjournment, had I not been of opinion that the subject of debate was of the most

paramount importance. The question before the House appears to me to divide itself into three different heads. First, comes the question of revenue, and the relief of taxation to the people of this country. Secondly, the subject appears to resolve itself into a question how far we should maintain the system of protection to our Colonies, so long afforded them. And, thirdly, Sir, in discussing this question, we are bound to consider whether we shall, or shall not, continue to maintain a national maritime preponderance by the encouragement on that part of our trade, which gives employment to our native seamen. Many returns and statements of figures have been laid before the House by the Ministers of the Crown, and on other occasions by the Board of Trade: and I will commence my observations by endeavouring to show that no dependence can be placed on a superficial view of the figures emanating from the latter. A lamented and illustrious statesman, a relative of mine, made this observation—that the last thing to which he inclined to pay any attention—the last thing he felt inclined to consult—the last thing he felt inclined to believe, was a statement of figures made to this House. And this may truly be said, I think, of the figures produced by the Board of Trade. Now, to show how difficult it is to judge of the real condition of the commercial marine of this country by the statistics of the Board of Trade, it is only necessary to refer to the Tables of Revenue and Population, published by Mr. Porter in 1841, where it is stated that the number of registered steam vessels is 791, and the tonnage carried by them 95,795 tons. By another portion of a document emanating from the Board of Trade, it seems this country did not then possess 791 vessels of this class; but not less than 17,000, with a tonnage, not of 95,000 tons, but of 3,264,459 tons. Now, it appears to me the mode adopted of arriving at these larger numbers is by registering the voyage of every wretched miserable sloop that leaves the ports of the country; so that if each of these vessels made two voyages a month to Ostend, for instance, which would be twenty-four voyages for the year, each would enter into the account as twenty-four vessels. Therefore, this would be the effect—that an East India ship of 500 tons, making one voyage in the year out and home, and employing thirty seamen, would figure in these returns as 500 tons; while a wretched, paltry sloop, such as I

have mentioned, carrying only 50 tons, and manned by two men and a boy, making her only voyage to Ostend or Antwerp, would represent 1,200 tons. Well, then, these figures—emanating from authority, mind—being so fallacious, how can we look at the returns of the Board of Trade and judge of the amount of our mercantile marine, or the extent of our foreign commerce? How are we to draw, or how can any man draw, correct conclusions from such documents? This small sloop of which I speak, its crew earning in wages 72*l.*, would represent more tonnage than the East India vessel paying wages to the amount of 720*l.* By the same rate, an Ostend steamer of 100 tons, and manned with five men and a boy, making two trips per week, would cause a splendid display of 10,400 tons. And again, a sloop of fifty tons, would show more than a Chinaman of 1,200 tons, manned by a crew of seventy-two men, and earning 1,728*l.* per annum. I could add other illustrations to those already given, and might speak of the returns of trade in guano, in which it is stated there are 679 ships employed, the tonnage of which is 219,764 tons, the crews 11,434 men, and the amount of wages 205,812*l.* These vessels brought home cargoes valued at 1,668,000*l.* Now compare the Return of this trade with the Return of registered steam vessels, and then judge of the accuracy of these returns for comparison. Could any comparison be made with the guano trade, which is said to employ upwards of 11,000 seamen, and the return of registered steam vessels and their tonnage. I hope, Sir, I have shown to this House sufficient to convince it that we cannot rely upon the statements made upon the position of our foreign trade; and its Members must not be carried away by the statistical information issued by the Board of Trade. But having touched upon this subject, I will address a few observations to the House upon the matter of price. The hon. Member for Kendal (Mr. Warburton) has stated that the reduction of duty kept the Americans from obtaining an excessive price for the timber of that country. That is a point on which I will meet the Ministry. In the year 1842, when a reduction of taxation was proposed, it became me, in the exercise of my duty as the representative of a constituency connected with the shipping interest, to wait on the President of the Board of Trade, the Earl of Ripon, and state to him that the reduction of the duty on timber would

have one of two effects, either that the natives on the shores of the Baltic would pocket the duty taken off their products, or that the Canadian trade would be injured to some extent. I think I can show to a demonstration that one of those results has happened. I will show by evidence which cannot be doubted, that the average price of timber from Quebec has been reduced, whilst the large amount of the duties taken off has gone into the pockets of the foreigner. I hold in my hand a list of the average prices of timber, which was furnished by Mr. Ranklin, of Liverpool, and sent to that gentleman by Messrs. Ranklin, of Elsinore. The firm which has furnished this information is of the highest character, and engaged in extensive trade; and therefore the statement given by these gentlemen may be relied on as correct by the House. Now, I find that the price of red pine in Canada in the years 1839 and 1840, was 9*d.* per foot. In 1841 it was 9½*d.* per foot. This makes an average of 9¼*d.* per foot. I omit the year 1842 from my statement, because the Ministry do not approve of looking at that period. I do not state the average of that year—the year 1842—because it seems that Ministers almost regard the commencement of the world as dating after that year. Ministers would almost seem to regard that period, as the era of the Revolution in France had been regarded by those engaged in it, and desire to date all future time from its commencement. The year 1842 is so highly regarded, that it would be nothing wonderful if we no longer dated so many years after the birth of Christ, but after the advent of the right hon. Baronet, Sir Robert Peel, to office. I shall, Sir, under these circumstances, leave out this year 1842. I shall apply myself to the three years before 1842, and the three years following that memorable era; and I find the average price of timber for the three years before 1842, was 9½*d.* per foot; and I further find, that the average price for three years following 1842, had fallen to 7¾*d.* per foot. This is sufficient to show that the reduction in the price of red pine coming from Quebec was 13½ per cent. I will also give the House the price of yellow pine, which I think the hon. Member for Kendal admitted has fallen in price after the duty had been lowered. I find the average of yellow pine before the duty was reduced was 42*d.* per foot, and which fell to 44*d.*, making a reduction by the effect of differential duty of

10 per cent. A reduction, then, had taken place in Canada of $13\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. in the price of red pine, and of 10 per cent. in yellow pine. Yet, if we refer to the statement of the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, we should learn that by the reduction of duty prices would not fall but rise. I think, Sir, I have shown that those persons who represented the shipping interest in the year 1842 have not been so far out in their calculations as the right hon. Baronet would have the country believe. I have other returns than those I have given, but I think the House will be satisfied with those of Messrs. Ranklin on Canadian timber, which I have quoted, and may be relied upon. I will now refer to the price of Baltic timber; and I am extremely glad to say I shall quote an authority of great weight with this House. It is always pleasing to quote from the speeches of a Cabinet Minister, but I can now quote from the published writings of a Cabinet Minister, who, rather than contravene his opinions, thought proper to resign his seat. I quote from the pamphlet of Mr. Gladstone, published in 1845. The object of Mr. Gladstone in this pamphlet, was to show the great advantage the consumers would obtain by the reduction of the duties. He said, that up to the year 1845—the period at which the right hon. Gentleman wrote—the measure of the Government had not had fair play, and that the experience of another year would afford a better test of the advantages the consumer would derive from their operation. He referred to those predictions he made at the time those measures were passed, in respect of which we have been so much laughed at. The right hon. Gentleman says—

"When, however, it is remembered how peculiar was the course of the timber trade, and the mode of preparing deals for the British market under the former law, that we have only two years of the new system before us, and that timber does not come here until after the timber is cut, I think it is evident that another twelve-month at least must elapse before we can fully appreciate the benefits of the alteration which has been made. As, however, it was confidently predicted by many persons that the consumer would not obtain the benefit of the great reduction of the duties on foreign timber, I have referred to trustworthy sources of information, and have obtained the following results."

Mr. Gladstone then says, that it appears that the price of Dantzic or Memel timber in the London market, duty paid, was, in January, 1842, 5*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* per load, and that, in January, 1845, when the duty was

lower by 30*s.*, the price varied from 4*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.* to 4*l.* 10*s.*, and, consequently, the mean price was 4*l.* 8*s.* 9*d.*; the reduction to the consumer in 1845 being 1*l.* 3*s.* 9*d.*, leaving the remaining 6*s.* 3*d.* to go into the pocket of the foreign producer. Now, Sir, I have taken the same month of January, in 1846, and I find that, at that period, the price of Dantzic or Memel timber per load, duty paid, in the London market, varied from 4*l.* 10*s.* to 5*l.*; mean price being 4*l.* 15*s.* The result is that the reduction to the consumer in January, 1846, out of the 30*s.* of reduced duty, is no more than 16*s.* 6*d.*, the other 13*s.* 6*d.* going into the pocket of the foreign grower. And, Sir, I want to know, whether my hon. Friends around me call upon the Government to reduce the excise duty, of which the profits are divided between the consumers and the growers of the articles on which the duties are levied, they are not wiser than Her Majesty's Government, who seem to have adopted this principle, viz., that we should abandon all reduction of excise duties, and limit ourselves to reductions of customs duties, that is, of duties upon articles which came into competition with the industry and labour of our own people? But the right hon. Gentleman (Mr. Gladstone) is not contented with the prices in the London markets only, but goes further, and refers to those of the Liverpool market. He says that the price of Dantzic fir, common and middling, sold in Liverpool, was—

			per foot.
In Jan. 1841 ...	26½ <i>d.</i> to 27 <i>d.</i> ...	mean	26½ <i>d.</i>
" 1842 ...	24½ <i>d.</i> to 25½ <i>d.</i> ...	"	25 <i>d.</i>
" 1845 ...	19½ <i>d.</i> to 21 <i>d.</i> ...	"	20½ <i>d.</i>

showing a reduction in 1845, as compared with 1841, of 6½*d.* per foot, or 27*s.* 1*d.* per load; and a reduction in 1845, as compared with 1842, of 4½*d.* per foot, or 19*s.* 10*d.* per load. But the result of this is, that the foreign producer, who, in 1845, as compared with 1841, put 2*s.* 11*d.* out of the reduced duty of 30*s.* in his own pocket, did, in 1845, as compared with 1842, put into his own pocket, no less than 10*s.* 2*d.* of the same 30*s.* But I have taken the liberty of carrying forward the calculations of the right hon. Gentleman, and I find that, in the month of January, 1846, the price of Dantzic fir, common or middling, sold in Liverpool, had risen to 23*d.* and 24*d.*, the mean price being 23½*d.*; so that, if you compare the respective years 1841 and 1842 with 1846, the period by which, as

the right hon. Gentleman has told you, you were to be enabled more fully to appreciate the results of this measure, you will find that the reduction to the consumer in 1846, as compared with 1841, has fallen to $3\frac{1}{4}d.$ per foot, or $13s. 6\frac{1}{2}d.$ per load, and that the reduction in 1846, as compared with 1842, has fallen to $5s. 2\frac{1}{2}d.$ per load: the gain to the foreigner being $16s. 5\frac{1}{2}d.$ in 1846 as compared with 1841, and, in 1846 as compared with 1842, no less than $24s. 9\frac{1}{2}d.$ Now, Sir, I am aware that it may be said that the trade with the Canadas has, notwithstanding, greatly increased. It is perfectly true, that the trade has increased; but I apprehend that that increase has not arisen from any reduction of these duties, but that it is to be attributed to the great increase in railway speculation, and the consequent demand for timber for railway sleepers and buildings. ["Hear!"] Do those Gentlemen who cry "hear" think, let me ask them, that any one of those railways which have been constructed, would not have been constructed if these duties had not been altered? I am myself a holder of railway shares; and I must confess that I never remember it to have been a matter of question whether a railway should be constructed or not, or whether wooden sleepers instead of stone should be adopted, in consequence of Her Majesty's Government having altered the timber duties, and that wood could be got $5s. 2d.$ a load cheaper. I do not at the moment see my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland (Mr. Hudson) in his place, or I would venture to appeal to him whether one foot the less of timber would have been bought for railway purposes, if the duties had remained the same as they originally were. I know well what his answer would be; and, if so, it must be clear to this House—so far at least as increased consumption is concerned in respect of timber—that the reduction of the duties has been an unmitigated loss to the consumer; and that, but for this increased railway speculation, the Canadas would have suffered much both as regards the price of their timber, and the increase of their exports. But the right hon. Gentleman the First Lord of the Treasury, on a former occasion, appealed to the trade of Liverpool, and drew a comparison of the tonnage employed in 1845, as compared with his favourite year of 1842. I think my right hon. Friend said that 222,000 tons entered inwards in 1845, and 180,000 in 1842. But, that the House may see how unfair my right hon. Friend

is in making quotations, I will read a statement from a circular of Messrs. Dempsey, Frost, and Co., dated Feb. 22, 1846. I think that my hon. Friends around me may have good reason to complain that the information which I moved for some six or seven weeks since has been kept back so long. I refer to a Return, for which I have moved, of the timber-laden ships entered inwards for the last seven years. And I may take this opportunity of saying that it was only this morning we got a Return, which had been for some time moved for, of the guano-laden vessels which have entered inwards, whilst, if the right hon. Gentleman moves for a Return, it is presented the next day. But the right hon. Gentleman spoke, on a former occasion, of the great increase of the trade of late. But why was that? Why, the revolution, I may almost term it, which he himself produced in the commerce of the country in 1842, threw the trade into complete confusion. I find that the tonnage employed in the British American trade in 1842, was 165 ships and 91,179 tonnage; but, if I look to the year before, I find that, instead of 165 ships and 91,179 tonnage, the ships were 318, and the tonnage 174,948. The right hon. Gentleman never condescends to look back to the time when the Whigs were in office. But, looking back all the way to the year 1831, I find no two single years in which the amount of tonnage employed in the British American trade was so low as that which the right hon. Gentleman takes as his criterion. I will take the average of three years since the alteration of the timber duties, and compare the results of the North American trade with the same during earlier triennial periods, and then contrast it with the results of the Baltic trade. I find that the average increase on the last period of three years, as compared with the three years previous to 1842, is 36 per cent. of tonnage in the North American trade; but comparing the three years of 1839, 1840, and 1841, with 1831, 1832, and 1833, I find the increase was 66 per cent.; so that it appears that the Canada trade was progressing before the alteration in the reduction of the duty; and that it has not progressed since, notwithstanding the demand caused by the increase of railway speculation. In contrasting the Canada with the Baltic trade, I find that the average importation of the three years 1831, 1832, and 1833, by timber-laden ships, was 21,164 tons. In the triennial period immediately

before the reduction of the differential duties, the average tonnage laden with Baltic timber fell from that amount to an average of 14,442, so that whilst under the old duties the Baltic importation fell one-third, the importation from Canada, under the differential duties, increased by 66 per cent. I think, then, Sir, I have shown good cause why our Canadian Colonies have reason to be alarmed at this alteration, and, Sir, I much fear they are alarmed already. The Canadian mail arrived but two days since; and what is the intelligence she has brought? Why, Sir, that the greatest dissatisfaction prevails in the Canadas, and that they are already discussing the question whether it is not better that they should be annexed to the United States of America. The hon. and learned Member for Liskeard shakes his head; but this, I assure him, is the information which has come to this country. They say—

"We admit your cotton manufactures, we admit your woollen manufactures, at $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. duty, whilst we place 15 per cent. upon those of the United States; and if you are about to withdraw from us protection—you, who only two years ago, gave to us the boon of the Canada Corn Bill—if you are going to deprive us, as you deprive the farmers of England, of protection, and to extend the principle you now apply to timber, to corn as well, we had better by half join the United States."

But I will read a passage from the leading article of the *Montreal Gazette* of the 25th of February last; and, perhaps, I ought more properly to have observed, it was in Canada West that the feeling to which I have referred principally prevails. The article to which I allude says:—

"When Lord John Russell, now some fifteen years ago, came down with a proposition for demolishing the pocket boroughs, an hon. Legislator"—[I well remember the occurrence, for I sat by the side of my old friend Mr. John Smith; for he it was at the time]—"an hon. Legislator said, that the temerity of the proposal 'fairly took his breath away.' The boldness of the financial scheme of Sir Robert Peel, striking at once at provisions, corn, and timber, at every branch of trade in this Colony, on the protection of which the producers had relied, has had something of a similar effect here. The majority yet remain in breathless astonishment, mingled with no little consternation and alarm, and not the less so that we are so remote from the scene of action, that in all probability the deed will be consummated before our remonstrances can be heard. We have at present, however, little time or space at our disposal to speculate on the consequences of the apparently inevitable carrying of the Premier's measure; and we only wish to convey to our English readers what appears to be the impression of the best informed persons in this quarter."

Will the free traders now—will the hon. Gentlemen opposite now—taunt us with

unnecessary delay? Thank God, we have delayed this measure till the "remonstrances" of our Canadian Colonies have been heard; and, but for the assistance of the patriotic band around me, the measure would have been carried there without it. The Colonies have now, however, been heard; and I trust that this House will pause before it passes hurriedly through it a measure which has created such consternation and alarm in our Canadian possessions. Surely, Sir, this is not the time—when America is arming her seaboard, and when Mr. Quincy Adams impiously and blasphemously calls to his aid the Word of God as a justification for lighting up the firebrand, and unleashing the hell-dogs of war; surely this is not a very happy moment for Her Majesty's Government to shake, by their Tariff and Customs Act, the fidelity and attachment of our Canadian fellow subjects. There is a little cloud in the west, which may grow blacker still, and, perhaps, break upon us, if such measures as these are adopted in regard to our Canadian Colonies. Sir, I am as anxious as any man that peace should be maintained with honour. I think this country can well afford to repose upon her laurels, and not to enter again upon the contests of war. I must say that I do not think that the way to obtain peace is by a dishonourable sacrifice of our colonial, or of our domestic, industry. I am as willing as any man can be, that, if any doubt arises as to our rights, they should be referred to any umpire—I care not whom—and, rather than we should wrongfully take anything where a doubt may exist as to our right to take it, willingly will I concede it to the American States. But if it comes to this, that the Bible is to be quoted as the foundation for America's title to the Oregon territory, I trust that we shall not go sneaking to America with an offer of free trade in corn, of the birthright of British farmers, and of the carrying trade of British shipping. If, Sir, all honourable means shall have been used in vain, I shall meekly and humbly appeal, in confidence, to the All-powerful God of battle, and not address America in the language of purchase, but the thundering broadsides of line-of-battle ships. Firm in the justice of our cause, when the last resources of peace are gone, then, with the assistance of an All-just Providence, fearing no human enemy, we will send those British seamen, whom, by such measures as this of to-night you are going to destroy—we

will send those British sailors to visit the seaboard of America, and to speak to her in terms that cannot be misunderstood. The Member for East Gloucestershire has accurately stated the number of seamen employed in the Baltic trade, and the small proportion of them that are English compared with the number of those who are Russians, Norwegians, and Prussians. In 1844, as compared with 1841, it appears that the number of seamen in the foreign trade, engaged in the carrying of Baltic timber, had increased to upwards of 11,000, whilst yours had only increased to between 1,100 or 1,200. It is a question whether, under our laws, we can keep pace with the efforts of foreign seamen; and if I show what I contend I have shown, it proves that your present regulations are not such as will conduce to the continued maintenance of your pre-eminence on the seas. But the hon. Gentleman the Secretary to the Treasury seemed altogether to limit his view to the trade with Great Britain, and says to us, "See what you have done, on a comparison between yourselves and the whole world." But that I may show how little there was in his observations, I will turn the table upon him, and show how the trade of Denmark stands. I will first refer to Prussia. Here is a proof of the advantages of free trade. You altered your navigation laws in the year 1825 or in 1826, I do not now remember which, and what has been the consequence? I will read you a statement respecting the shipping trade with Prussia for eleven years. I find in 1828 the carrying trade of Prussia was sustained by 468 vessels belonging to Great Britain, and by 224 belonging to Prussia; in 1829, by 465 British and 254 Prussian; in 1830, by 332 British and 213 Prussian; in 1831, by 285 British and 213 Prussian; in 1832, by 238 British and 331 Prussian; in 1833, by 199 British and 373 Prussian; in 1834, by 131 British and 376 Prussian; in 1835, by 82 British and 387 Prussian; and in 1836, by 149 British and 439 Prussian. Now, how is it I find that in eleven years after 1826, namely, in 1837, that instead of the trade being carried on by 468 British ships and 224 Prussian ships, it was carried on by 201 British ships and 411 Prussian? How is it, I ask that in the eleven years following 1826, the 468 British had fallen to 201, while the Prussian vessels had risen in number to 411? The return I have just read, shows that the ships of Great Britain fell off one-half,

while those of Prussia had augmented to nearly double. With such a fact self-evident, I should like to know how you are to keep the balance of your power, as far as Prussia is concerned. Now, in respect to Denmark, I shall briefly glance at the state of our shipping trade, as compared with that country: well, I find, by reference to Mr. Macgregor, that in the year 1838, there passed—

	British Ships.	Danish Ships.	
The large Belt . .	7	2,068	
Sleswick, Hol- stein Canal ... }	11	1,318	
Copenhagen	108	4,068	
Aalborg	nil	22	{ Coal ships & a few car- goes of salt & iron.
	126	7,476	

This shows, in the carrying trade with Denmark, the proportion of British vessels engaged was, in 1838, 177 to 1,476. In 1844, I find that the number of Danish ships entering the ports of Great Britain was 1,667, the tonnage 123,674, and the crews 8,120; while the number of British ships from Denmark to Great Britain was only 59, the tonnage 7,423, and the crews 444. I will next take the revenue returns of the right hon. Gentleman himself (Sir Robert Peel), and what do I find the result to be? The returns are certainly jumbled together in such a way that it is difficult to collect direct proof, in order to ascertain the question we have to decide. The question I understand to be this:—How has our foreign trade prospered under those alterations? Our colonial trade is a protected trade, and under that system has flourished; but in those returns to which I have alluded, the colonial trade is brought to the help of the foreign, and hence we find a difficulty in arriving at a correct result. As it is, I find, by the return of the registrar of shipping, an authority than which there can be none better, because there can be no deception in it, that in the year 1820 the tonnage amounted to 2,648,593 tons; that in 1844 it had risen to 3,637,231 tons; thus showing an increase of 988,636 tons, or, in other words, an increase of 37 per cent. But in the mean time your population had increased at the rate of 39 per cent., so while the population of Great Britain increased 39 per cent., the number of re-

gistered ships increased only 37 per cent. I want, therefore, to know, Sir, whether there is any just reason to boast of the prosperity of our shipping interest, when it is proved, beyond all matter of doubt, that it has not kept pace with the population? Let us now see how it fared with foreign. Did it increase 37 per cent.? I find that in 1820 the tonnage of foreign vessels entered in British ports amounted to 561,047 tons, and that in 1832 it had increased to 1,353,745 tons. Thus, while our registered tonnage increased 37 per cent., the foreign increased 141 per cent. This may be a question to try our strength with the United States. I find in the period from 1820 to 1844 the registered tonnage of the United States increased from 1,280,150 to 2,280,095 tons, showing an increase of 77 per cent. During the same period, let us look at what has been the progress of our importation in the articles which form the principal cargoes of the foreign trade of this country. I find that, in the commodity of cotton, from 1820 to 1844, the increase of importation has been 344 per cent., and in timber 77 per cent. Thus, you will perceive that with the increase of the two bulkiest articles the increase of registered tonnage has been but 37 per cent. The right hon. Gentleman (Sir R. Peel) has taken the year 1842, and I will take the same period. I find it has been stated, in the first place, how much foreign trade has increased since 1842. I find the foreign trade, as compared with 1842, has increased from 2,734,983 to 2,947,157, showing an increase in tonnage of 212,274 tons. I have already shown you that in the Baltic trade alone the number of foreign seamen within the last year increased 11,000, no doubt many of them performing more than one voyage, some perhaps two or three. How is it in the case of British seamen? They have increased in number in the same period from 214,609 to 216,350, being an increase of 1,741; therefore not in the foreign trade alone but in the entire number of seamen employed, the increase has been but 1,741. I find on looking at the trade of America that on going back to the year 1769, when the United States were still British Colonies and dependencies of the British Crown, and when the population was but two millions, that the number of ships engaged in that trade was 1,078, and the number of British seamen 28,900. At the present day, after a lapse of seventy-seven years, the number of seamen engaged in trade with the United

States does not exceed 20,000, while the population of the States has increased from 2,000,000 to 20,000,000. This shows the nature of your Colonies, and yet, without even consulting them, or without waiting to hear the opinion of the Canadas upon a subject so vitally important to their staple trade, you are trying to force a measure which they confess has filled them with alarm and consternation. The hon. Gentleman the Member for Kendal (Mr. Warburton), has made some reference to the expedition to Copenhagen, and has stated what he terms "a fact," but which I think is only a political metaphor—namely, that it was a matter of notoriety that at the end of the war scarcely a Norwegian captain was without a medal or decoration attesting his bravery in the service of this country. This is the first time that I have ever heard of such rewards. A right hon. and learned, and I may say a gallant Friend of mine partook in the glories of that day, when he found a Nelson and a Wellington vying with each other to shed the greatest lustre upon the annals of those glorious victories, and contending to maintain inviolate the independence of their native land. Yes, Sir, my hon. and learned Friend the Attorney General (Sir F. Thesiger), I believe partook in the glory of those splendid naval achievements, the battle of Copenhagen; he has been ever ready to serve his country in the hour of danger, for when England was struggling with the united armies of American, and almost the entire of Europe, he served beneath her colours, and, when peace was restored, turned his great abilities with no less success to other more pacific pursuits. Yet, Sir, although my hon. and learned Friend was engaged in the battle of Copenhagen, I have never seen any decoration of merit appended from his button-hole. If medals were distributed, as the hon. Member for Kendal assures us they were, my right hon. Friend has not been dealt fairly by, for he can boast of no such distinguished trophy. [Several hon. MEMBERS: Divide, divide! Question!] Hon. Gentlemen do not like to hear this discussion. I am aware hon. Gentlemen would wish to bring this portion of the debate to as rapid a conclusion as possible; but I think it is a question upon which we who seek to maintain the maritime strength of England, and who wish to retain the affection and allegiance of our Canadian Colonies, are entitled to have a fair and attentive hearing. I do not wish

the House to form any erroneous opinions upon this subject. Let us remember that as the Danes were once ready to enlist under the tri-coloured banner of France against us, it is not probable they will readily forgive or forget the injury we inflicted on them as a retaliation. I think, recollecting as we do the sentiments that prevail among a portion of the French people, we ought not to be in too great a hurry to pass any measure that may tend to revive irritated feelings, or weaken our defensive power. Sir, what we have seen before we may see again. Hon. Gentlemen have derided the flag of protection and those who are prepared to support it. I for one am not ashamed to hoist the flag of protection. [*Calls of "Divide!"*] Let those who cry so loudly "divide, divide," get up and answer me and refute my statements if they can. I have defied them before, and I defy them now to meet me on any of my statements, or to contradict any of my allegations. The hon. Gentleman the Member for Lambeth knows I am not afraid to submit my figures to investigation, and I defy him to answer the statements I have made. I am not ashamed, and I never shall be, to hoist the flag of protection. Do the gentlemen of England remember the past seasons of deficient harvests? Do they remember the twenty years' war? Do they remember that struggle, without a parallel in the history of the world, when every country of Europe was desolated by military invasion and all the concomitant horrors of warfare—when Prussia and Russia were laid waste—when the noble and patriotic Russians were obliged, rather than permit their capital of Moscow to fall into the hands of the French, to reduce it to ashes? Do the "gentlemen of England who sit at home at ease," remember that their property, nay more, that their lives, and the lives of all they hold dear, are dependent upon the courage of those British seamen—the defenders of Old England's wooden walls? If hon. Gentlemen who so impatiently call for a division, wish it, they may enlist under the Norwegian banner, with its white ground and crimson cross, or under the flag of America, resplendent with its thirteen stars; but I am assured my hon. Friends who surround me will enlist with me under the old weather-beaten union jack of England—

"The flag that braved a thousand years
The battle and the breeze."

SIR G. CLERK said, it was not his in-

tention to trespass long upon the patience of the House; neither would he, in the few observations he had to make, travel far from the question, but on the contrary, strictly confine himself to the proposition before the House. If he might be permitted, he would be glad to state, that the question now under consideration was, whether upon any article not a primary necessary of life, but conducive, in a great measure, to the health and comfort of all classes of the community, they ought to reduce a duty amounting to 35 per cent—not to take it away, but to retain a protective duty upon an article of an inferior description, which they could obtain from their own Colonies. The noble Lord who had last addressed the House, objected to the reduction of duty upon three grounds, viz., loss to the revenue, injury to our colonial dependencies, and the necessity that existed for maintaining our supremacy at sea. The hon. Member for Oxfordshire (Mr. Henley) had also objected to the change, on the ground that a certain amount of revenue would be unnecessarily thrown away by reducing the duty from 25s. to 15s. But if that statement were correct, what would become of the allegation that we should be inundated with foreign timber under the proposed alteration? The fact was, that an additional importation of about 200,000 loads of timber, would make up for the loss to the revenue which the diminution of the duty would occasion. He believed that, under the measure then before the House, a larger quantity of timber than heretofore would be introduced into this country; because the Canadian timber and the Baltic timber were of totally different qualities, and were used for totally different purposes. Nothing but the great difference in the prices could have induced the people of this country to have used Canadian yellow pine for purposes to which the Baltic timber was peculiarly applicable. Complaints had invariably been made, that reductions of timber duties would be destructive to the shipping interest of this country, and ruinous to the Canadian trade. Those predictions had been made in the year 1821, when it had been proposed to reduce the protecting duty on Canadian timber from 65s. to 45s.; and again in the year 1842, when it had been proposed to reduce the protecting duty from 45s. to 25s., similar predictions had been uttered. Upon that occasion, hon. Members who resisted the withdrawal of a portion of the protective duty, stated

that the measure would be productive of the worst possible consequences—that the Canadian trade would be ruined, and the interests of a valuable dependency seriously affected. Now, the duty of 45s. remained untouched until the year 1842, when it was reduced to 25s., and then they were told they were going beyond the line of prudence, because 30s. ought to be the lowest amount of protection retained, for otherwise a reduction to 25s. would annihilate the Canada trade. Had those predictions been verified; and what had been the result of reducing the duty on Baltic timber? Owing to the change which has taken place in the mode of charging the duty on timber, in 1842, it was impossible to make any very accurate comparison of the quantities imported; but some approximation to it would be attained by comparing the revenue received in 1841 with that of the year 1845. In the year 1841, before the reduction of the duty, the duty on Canadian timber was 10s. per load; and it produced a revenue of 450,000*l.* It was quite clear that if they had made a reduction from 10s. to 1s., if the quantity of timber had remained the same, the amount of revenue would have been 45,000*l.* In 1843, the actual duty received on Canadian timber amounted to 68,760*l.*; in 1844, to 71,069*l.*; and in 1845, to 94,862*l.*; showing that, during those three years, instead of the quantity of timber falling off, the revenue derived from Canadian timber had increased 120 per cent. There had been a reduction made from 35s. to 25s. per load on the Baltic timber, and the duty received in the year 1841 amounted to upwards of one million. In 1843, it fell to 575,000*l.*; while in 1844, it rose to 820,000*l.*; and in 1845, to 947,000*l.*; showing an increase, but not to the same extent as had taken place in respect to timber from Canada. Under those circumstances, he considered that, from the practical experience of past years, there was not any fair reason for expecting the disastrous consequences which some hon. Gentlemen seemed to apprehend. When the subject was under the consideration of a Committee of the House of Lords in 1821, what had been the proposition of that hon. House? Why, they considered it was impossible any longer to maintain the extravagant rate of protection, and recommended a reduction equivalent to the difference of freight between Baltic and Canadian timber. The noble Lord (Lord G. Bentinck) had said, “I object to your

policy, because the consumer will not have any benefit.” If he could show, from returns relating to Canadian and Baltic timber, that, notwithstanding the greatly increased supply, the demand was so great that prices had been kept up, he would ask what would have been the effect upon railway speculations, and other pursuits of a mercantile character to which timber was generally applied, if the duty had not been previously reduced. Baltic timber never had been used in the construction of railways until the last year, because the high protective duty excluded it; but it had been used within the last twelve months, because timber of a cheaper description could not be procured for “sleepers.” The noble Lord had also said the effect of the measure would be to lower the price to the producer, and that he had invoices to show that the price in Canada had fallen 2*d.* a foot, while no reduction had been made to the consumer in this country. When the hon. Member said that freights had fallen from 30s. to 27s., he should not suppose that the difference went into the pockets of the producer of timber in Norway and Denmark. On the contrary, the purchaser in this country reaped the advantage of that reduction. The noble Lord had stated, that in consequence of the Tariff of 1842, the shipping of this country had not increased in the same proportion as that of Norway and Denmark. But the paltry increase that had taken place in the small coasting vessels of those countries was not worthy of being taken into calculation; nor could it be expected that in a trade amounting to 3,600,000 tonnage, (independently of our foreign trade and the trade with Ireland,) the addition, though considerable, would be as great in proportion as that of a country whose vessels were 1,000 or 2,000 at the most. The noble Lord complained that certain returns for which he had moved were not laid on the Table; but this did not arise from any disposition on the part of the Government to keep back information, but because at this period of the year it was impossible to make up returns showing the several countries from which ships came, and the amount of their tonnage respectively. Two returns had been made. One showed that the number of ships had, during the last twenty years, increased from 25,000 to upwards of 31,000. But as ships were merely the machines in which trade was carried, it would be no information to show the increase in the number of ships, without

showing how they were employed. The other return, therefore, showed the extent to which these ships have been employed, by stating the number of vessels and tonnage entered inwards and outwards for a series of years. The noble Lord said, that our population had increased from 1820 to 1840 in a much greater ratio than the shipping, and that was a proof that our commerce had been falling off. But during that period such great improvements had been made in our naval architecture, that one ship now did three times the work of any of the tubs of former years. Whatever might have been the increase in the number of ships, it was quite certain that the trade of this country had rapidly progressed. The noble Lord said, the proportion of vessels coming into this country from Denmark and Norway was larger than that of ships of any other country. And why? Mr. Chapinan, a very large shipowner of Liverpool, explained the reason. He was asked, "Can you account for the great preponderance of foreign ships engaged in the Baltic trade?" He answered, that there were many other trades much more profitable. The shipping interest, therefore, abandoned a great portion of that trade, that their vessels might be more profitably employed in other voyages. The exports from Denmark and Norway were bulky articles of little intrinsic value, and our shipowners did not think that they could be sufficiently remunerated in continuing in the trade. But it had been stated, that the shipowners of this country could not compete with the foreign shipowner, because he manages his ship at so much less expense. Now, what had been done by the Government already had tended greatly to diminish the expense and inconvenience to which the British shipowner was subjected. Mr. George Frederick Young, one of those who signed the petition of the shipowners, was asked what was the effect of the diminution produced by the Tariff of 1842 in the duty on the raw materials of shipbuilding; and he stated that the reduction of the duty on timber took 1*l.* per ton off the expenses of shipbuilding in London—in the port of London the expense is 16*l.* to 18*l.* per ton—and that at Sunderland, where a ship formerly cost 12*l.* per ton, it can be now built for 10*l.* per ton. That showed a reduction of one-sixth, or of 17 per cent. on the cost. Mr. Chapinan having been asked how far the British shipowner could compete with the foreigner, said—

"If the restrictions on the British shipowners

were removed—if, for instance, we had formerly our timber and provisions on the same terms that we now have them, the foreigner would never have made the advances in shipping which he has done. If we were only but on an equality with foreigners with respect to the raw materials, I think we could cope with the ships of any nation, though we pay double the taxation."

And he went on to state—

"I think we can work our ships 30 per cent. cheaper since the Tariff. We can now better afford to go to Quebec for a consignment of timber at 30*s.* a load, than we could at 32*s.* or 39*s.* before the Tariff."

But other measures had been introduced, which would afford the greatest possible relief to the shipowners. The duty on hemp and other articles used in shipbuilding had been repealed during the last year. The hon. Member stated, that every shipowner in this country had been in a flourishing state up to the year 1840; but, that for the next three years they were in a state of great depression. It would certainly be a matter of great surprise if during those years, when every interest in this country was in the greatest state of distress, that the shipping interest should altogether escape. But foreign competition was alleged as the reason. That was not the cause. It arose from the shipowners having in 1838 and 1839 overdone the trade, so that the increase of tonnage amounted to 300,000 or 400,000. He wished to call the attention of the House to a comparison between our own shipping and that of the greatest commercial navy in the world next to our own—he alluded to the United States. In the year 1845, the tonnage of British ships, independent of those engaged in the foreign trade and the trade with Ireland, amounted to 3,669,000. The tonnage belonging to the United States, entered into this country in the last year, was only 448,000. When he looked to what was the state of trade in the ports of the United States, he found that in 1828 the British tonnage entered there amounted to 98,000 tons; and in that year the American tonnage amounted to 868,000, being almost nine times the amount of the British tonnage. Now, what was the proportion of the tonnage in 1844? In that year the American tonnage was 1,977,000, whereas the British tonnage entering the American ports had increased from 98,000 tons to 776,000 tons, being an increase of nearly ninefold. There was, therefore, no reason whatever for apprehending that either the number of our ships or the efficiency of our commercial marine had been

at all injured by the measures that had been adopted either in 1842 or in 1824. These details might appear to many Gentlemen to be uninteresting; but he hoped he might be excused for stating such arguments as would assist the House in forming a judgment on the question before it. It had been stated, that in 1824 the Parliament had erred, and that now the Government were taking another step in a wrong direction, and going to do that which would be highly mischievous to our trade. His object was to show that the measures taken in 1824, and by his right hon. Friend in 1842, were, so far from being prejudicial, of the greatest advantage to the trade and commerce of the country. The returns before the House showed that trade had regularly progressed and flourished in consequence of those measures. One of those returns gave the amount of the foreign trade of the port of London in 1836—the first year in which the return was made, but a year of great excitement and speculation, and, therefore, one which might fairly be adduced as a specimen—the British tonnage entering the port of London in that year was 772,000 tons, and the foreign tonnage amounted to 255,000 tons, being in the proportion of one to three. In 1844 the British tonnage had increased to 1,800,000 tons, and the foreign 383,000 tons. The same thing would appear if they went to the port of Liverpool. The year 1845, which the noble Lord complained, had been the only year quoted by his right hon. Friend (Sir Robert Peel), exhibited an increase not above the year 1842 only, but above any of the most prosperous years ever known in the port of Liverpool. The number of vessels which entered the port of Liverpool from Canada, laden with Canadian timber in 1839 was 339, their tonnage being 170,000. This was the largest amount of ships entered during the existence of the high duties on foreign timber. He would take the two years since the reduction of the duty. In 1844, the number of ships entering the port of Liverpool from Canada with timber was 369, and the tonnage was 189,000 tons; in 1845, the number of ships was 453, and the amount of tonnage 239,000, being one third more than in the year 1839. He thought these facts completely made out this proposition, that since the reduction of the duty in 1842, the importation of Canadian timber into this country had increased in proportion to the increased quantity of timber

brought from the Baltic; and it further proved the soundness of the policy of reducing the duty on the importation of this important article, and that that reduction had not been brought about in a rash manner, or in any way that could injure the interests of our Canadian Colonies, but that we had still preserved a discriminating duty in favour of Canadian timber of upwards of 20 per cent. The timber trade of the Colonies, therefore, would receive no injury, and a great benefit would be obtained by the consumer. The amount of British tonnage had increased as well as the number of ships year by year since the changes in 1842, by which, on the evidence of the shipowners themselves, it was shown that they were able to navigate their ships 30 per cent. cheaper than before. With the statement of these facts, he should leave the decision of the question in the hands of the House.

Mr. C. BULLER: Sir, I think I may ask the indulgence of the House while I make a few remarks on this question; inasmuch as I believe I am almost the only Member that has not taken part in this free-trade debate. I felt myself so incompetent to deal with these commercial and financial questions, that I thought I might leave them in better hands; but from what I have heard of the debate, and from what I have read in the reports, I think I understood them quite as well as some others. From the circumstances in which I am placed in relation to Canada, and the great interest I have always taken in colonial questions, I am induced to trouble the House with a few remarks upon the bearings of this question on colonial policy—the rest of it, I think, has been triumphantly disposed of. Before, however, I enter upon the discussion of the manner in which the noble Lord has treated this question as regards colonial policy, I will say just five words upon the mode in which he has dealt with it as bearing upon foreign policy. When the noble Lord unfurled the union-jack of the protection party, he might have recollected the altered position in which he now stands, as the leader of a great, and, as he says, a patriotic party, and have assumed some of the gravity and prudence which ought to belong to the leader of a great party. I much more admire the tone, as regards our foreign policy, which has been adopted by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, and the noble Lord with whom I usually act; and, however the noble Lord (Lord G. Bentinck)

may disprove of the course they have taken, I think it would have been far wiser, instead of attacking the American Senate and the Royal Family of France, to have followed the example of the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, who, on this subject, generally maintains a dignified silence, but who, when compelled to say anything, always uses the language of dignified courtesy; and who, in order to prevent war, has laid the foundations of peace by an extension of our commercial relations with those countries. I say it is far wiser so to act, than to get up bandying bombast with the braggarts of the American Congress; and almost justifying the vagaries of Mr. Adams, by adopting a tone of congenial bluster. I did venture, by a cheer and a shake of the head, to express my dissent, when the noble Lord said that the policy of the Government is causing, in the Canadas, the discussion of the propriety of throwing off their allegiance to this country, and annexing themselves to the United States. They! Whom does the word "they" mean? What are the organs of public opinion from which these facts are derived? When the noble Lord says that nothing is talked of but this annexation—[Lord G. BESTINCK: In Canada West]—I am coming to that. I suppose it was my cheer which induced the noble Lord to produce his authority, and he read an extract from a Montreal paper, which in the most violent language talked of throwing off the allegiance of Canada to this country. It happens that by the same post I have received a copy of the *Montreal Post*, which is a decided opponent of the Government; and how is the indignation of all Canada vented in that journal? Why, it is stated that the subject is so important that they must take a week to think it over. The noble Lord does not know so much of Canada and the Canadian press as I do. I believe in the last twenty years there has been no occasion on which the Government has bestowed an office on a member of any party, but the organs of the opposite party cried out that this was the proper time to throw off allegiance to this country; but this sort of bluster always ended in nothing, as I believe it will now: and those who have used this violent language, when a call is made upon their patriotism, will rally round the Government in the defence of their country. I think the right hon. Baronet and the Government, since he has been in office, have taken the best security against defection by binding Canada to this

country by ties of common interest and affection; by sending out such men as Sir Charles Bagot and Lord Metcalfe to govern; and by carrying out this course of policy all dissensions have been allayed, and civil war has been changed into mere squabbles of party; and more has been done than could have been effected by all the monopolies of a restrictive system. The noble Lord says that great indignation is felt at these measures in Canada West: why, that is the stupidest thing I ever heard, for Canada West has an uncommonly small interest in the question—it is a question of geography. [Lord G. BESTINCK: Corn.] I am coming to corn presently. Where does the timber come from? Why it comes entirely from Canada East. With the exception of the right bank of the Ottawa River, the province of Canada West has no interest in the timber trade. In a dispatch from Lord Sydenham, dated at Kingston, in Canada West, he says, "as for the timber trade, there is not a soul west of this town who has any interest in it." Where are the indications of the interest of Canada in this monopoly? When the former changes were in progress, I admit petitions against them were sent over; but was there any address from the Parliament of Canada West, praying that this interest might be kept up? But the Parliament of Canada East passed a resolution stating that they were ready to give up the monopoly of timber, if Great Britain would give them free trade in corn. Why did they take this tone? Was it out of spite to any other portion of the community? No: it was because every man of sense in the country was of opinion that nothing ever did them worse service than protection. In the first place the shipping trade of Canada was a scandal to that trade. Old and worn out-vessels were sent out imperfectly manned, and with a most disorderly set of seamen; and there were more shipwrecks in that portion of the trade than in all the rest of it. What was the effect produced in Canada? Did the merchants make large fortunes? There never were so many bankruptcies in New Brunswick and Lower Canada as in the timber trade; and that is the consequence of the trade having always been in a state of uncertainty. Do you suppose that the merchants of Canada will complain of the removal of this protection? I will venture to say there is not, at the present moment, a single trade in that country which they can engage in, in which there is a smaller number of opu-

lent merchants than in the timber trade. Well, when did this protection do good to the people or to the landowners? Why, the landowners of Lower Canada have passed resolutions against the monopoly. Did it do good to the timber trade itself? You have sought, by this monopoly, to give that trade such an advantage in this market, that like all other protected trades, those who were engaged in it have retired upon the protection, and not upon their own industry. They have, consequently, lowered the character of Canada timber to such a degree, that at the present moment Canadian timber does not maintain that station in the European market which it ought to have had, if the timber merchant had used common caution and prudence and good sense, and sent only good timber to the English market. But the fact is this, that your protection has given them such a monopoly in the home market, that they have sent here all their abominable bad timber, which many people find the effects of when they lie in bed; and they have sent all their good timber into the United States. Now, has the protection been a good thing for the population of Canada? Why, it is in evidence before all the Commissions, that one-half of the workmen there are Americans, who are induced to go over by high wages; that they are a set of lawless, dissolute persons, getting enormous wages during the season when their services were in request, and spending those wages in drinking and debauchery during other periods. But what has been the effect of this protection upon the industry of Canada, the great industry of Canada—that is, the agricultural interest—that interest which, if protection must be given, the Legislature ought to encourage? What has been the effect upon that interest of the timber monopoly? It gave an unnatural stimulus to employment in that trade. The consequence was it drew off all the best hands from agriculture, and the real and great staple industry of the country languished, because of this absurd monopoly, by which we endeavoured to cocker up the timber trade. I ask the House whether this has not been the case? and if so, was it wise of the Imperial Legislature to endeavour to foster this trade by artificial means? I do not approve of such artificial means in any instance; but I say, never did the Legislature act so unwisely as by attempting to establish an industry of this kind, which, from its nature, depended on an article

whose production proved year by year more scanty, an industry in its nature precarious, and one which has prevented proper attention being paid to the national staple interests of the country. Now I know there is a notion among some Gentlemen who advocate this protection—it is one of those ignorant notions which prevail in this country very extensively with reference to that Colony—though it is a very natural one, and one that I found to exist elsewhere—a notion that this was a sort of natural protection to the Canadian agriculturist, because his first operation in that country is to fell trees; and it is assumed that by giving him this artificial price for his timber, you the better enable him to get over the first expense of settling. Nothing could be more erroneous than this. If this protection ever did lead a Canadian to settle and clear land, it must have led him to make choice of the very worst soil for agricultural operations, because it is a matter of notoriety that wherever soft wood grows, that is the worst soil. But the truth is that you do not give even this benefit to the cultivator of the soil. All your protection does, is to give an increased price for the timber; and what is the effect? The timber-man comes in, selects one or two trees that are fit for his purpose, carries them away and leaves the rest standing, to encumber the agriculturist as much as before. This is the real truth of the case. Then, I say, that this is a trade which ought not on any account to have been considered by this country as one of such an advantageous and permanent nature, that we should make any sacrifice in order to foster it. But I must also say, that feeling this, I also feel perfectly sure that from the time that the right hon. Baronet has chosen to make this experiment, there never would have been a period adopted in which the change might be made with greater safety, because, from natural causes, there is an immense impetus given to this trade at the present moment. It wants not your protection; it needs no aid from monopoly at the present moment. The demand for timber on the continent of Europe, for the railways now in progress, is such as to enable the Canadian to sell his timber without any monopoly at all. What is more—and I wish Gentlemen to attend to this fact—there is a great and permanent change taking place in the market for Canada timber; the demand for it in the United States is such that, while Canada

timber lasts, it will find a much better market in the United States than at home. In the last two or three years, all the soft wood in the northern parts of the United States has been exhausted; the people in the Northern States of the Union must now go to Canada for their deals and other soft wood; and the consequence is, that nature herself has produced, without the aid of any artificial monopoly, a market in which Canada must have the monopoly—a great, and natural, and permanent market. And I say it is the greatest of all absurdities to prevent the people of England from getting cheap timber from the Baltic, in order to bring over here that timber for which the people of Canada might find a better market in the United States. And now, Sir, allow me, before I sit down—thanking the House for the patience with which they have listened to my observations on this question as it affects the Canadians—to say a few words with reference to its bearings on our own country. Sir, I look upon this question of timber as one of the greatest importance to the people of England. Every man's dwelling in this country is affected by the vote we are about to give. If you really have any care about the great mass of the people, poor and rich, you will cheerfully agree to-night to that which will give them cheaper and better materials for their dwellings. Sir, the noble Lord has been pleased to challenge me on the subject of Canadian corn. Well, the noble Lord had a right to give me the challenge; but what right had he to receive a single cheer from the patriotic Gentlemen about him? I must say, this plea which they now set up for protection to Canada corn is the strangest thing of the kind I ever heard. I see my hon. Friend the Member for Somersetshire (Mr. W. Miles) blushes at the mention of it. I recollect that, when the right hon. Baronet (Sir Robert Peel) proposed the Canada Corn Bill, in 1843, he recommended it as a boon to the agriculture of the Colony; and how did the country Gentlemen come forward then? Did they support the principles they had so long professed? Did they adhere to their old motto, "Ships, Colonies and Commerce," and say, "Oh, by all means, protect your Colonies—tax the people of England—perish our interests, so long as the interest of the Colonies is maintained?" They said no such thing. On the other hand, they said, "Corn will be so much a quarter cheaper—bread will be $2\frac{1}{4}$ d. the loaf

cheaper—you are about to let in a torrent of abundance in the shape of Canadian corn—God knows how cheap they can afford it—they will perhaps grow it for nothing, and bring it across the ocean for nothing." All these terrible things they brought forward to terrify us from admitting Canada corn. Well, the Bill passed, notwithstanding their fears; and now they come forward and tell us that in little more than two years another "protected interest" has grown up again. Well, really, these "protected interests" must be of amazingly quick growth; they seem to have something of the quality of mushrooms about them, and to thrive and spread most instantaneously from the hotbed of protection. But I say it is rather too much for the hon. Gentleman to come forward in this imploring manner, and to beseech us to keep up a protection which was established but two years or two years and a half ago. I contend that this is a most impudent claim, and one which I am sure the people of Canada themselves will entirely disavow.

The House divided on the Question, that the House agree with the Committee on the said Resolution:—Ayes 232; Noes 109: Majority 123.

List of the AYES.

Acheson, Viset.	Brownrigg, J. S.
Acland, T. D.	Bruce, Lord E.
A'Court, Capt.	Buller, C.
Aglionby, H. A.	Busfield, W.
Ainsworth, P.	Cardwell, E.
Aldam, W.	Carew, W. H. P.
Antrobus, E.	Carnegie, hon. Capt.
Archbold, R.	Cavendish, hon. G. H.
Baillie, Col.	Chapman, B.
Baillie, H. J.	Chichester, Lord J. L.
Baine, W.	Clay, Sir W.
Baird, W.	Clerk, rt. hon. Sir G.
Baldwin, D.	Cobden, R.
Bannerman, A.	Cochran, A.
Barclay, D.	Cockburn, rt. hn. Sir G.
Barkly, H.	Colebrooke, Sir T. E.
Baring, rt. hon. F. T.	Collett, J.
Baring, rt. hon. W. H.	Copeland, Ald.
Barnard, E. G.	Corry, rt. hon. H.
Beckett, W.	Courtenay, Lord
Berkeley, hon. C.	Cowper, hon. W. F.
Berkeley, hon. Capt.	Craig, W. G.
Bernal, R.	Crawford, W. S.
Blake, M. J.	Cripps, W.
Blewitt, R. J.	Currie, Raikes
Bodkin, W. H.	Dalmeny, Lord
Botfield, B.	Dalrymple, Capt.
Bouvier, hon. E. P.	Dawson, hon. T. V.
Bowes, J.	Denison, E. B.
Bowles, Adm.	Dennistoun, J.
Bowring, Dr.	D'Eyncourt, rt. hn. C. T.
Bridgeman, H.	Dickinson, F. H.
Bright, J.	Dodd, G.
Brotherton, J.	Douglas, Sir C. E.
Brown, hon. W.	Douro, Marq. of

Duke, Sir J.	Mainwaring, T.	Wall, C. B.	Wood, Col. T.
Duncan, G.	Marjoribanks, S.	Warburton, H.	Worsley, Lord
Duncannon, Visct.	Marshall, W.	Ward, H. G.	Wortley, hon. J. S.
Duncombe, T.	Martin, J.	Wawn, J. T.	Wrightson, W. B.
Dundas, Adm.	Masterman, J.	Wellesley, Lord C.	Wyse, T.
Easthope, Sir J.	Maule, rt. hon. F.	White, S.	Yorke, H. R.
Elbington, Visct.	Meynell, Capt.	Wilde, Sir T.	
Egerton, Sir P.	Milnes, R. M.	Williams, W.	TELLERS.
Ellice, rt. hon. E.	Mitcalfe, H.	Wilshire, W.	Young, R.
Ellice, E.	Moffatt, G.	Wood, C.	Baring, H.
Ellis, Wynn	Molesworth, Sir W.		
Elphinstone, H.	Morpeth, Visct.		
Escott, B.	Morris, D.		
Etwall, R.	Morrison, Gen.		
Evans, Sir Do L.	Muntz, G. F.		
Ewart, W.	Napier, Sir C.		
Feilden, W.	Neville, R.		
Fitzroy, hon. H.	O'Brien, J.		
Fitzroy, Lord C.	O'Connell, M. J.		
Fitzwilliam, hon. G. W.	O'Connell, J.		
Flower, Sir J.	Ord, W.		
Forster, M.	Osborne, R.		
Fox, Charles R.	Palmerston, Visct.		
Gibson, T. M.	Parker, John		
Gill, T.	Patten, J. W.		
Gore, M.	Pechell, Capt.		
Goulburn, rt. hon. H.	Peel, rt. hon. Sir R.		
Graham, rt. hon. Sir J.	Peel, J.		
Granger, T. C.	Plumridge, Capt.		
Greene, T.	Powell, C.		
Grey, rt. hon. Sir G.	Price, Sir R.		
Grosvenor, Lord R.	Protheroe, E.		
Hall, Sir B.	Pulsford, R.		
Hamilton, W. J.	Rawdon, Col.		
Hamilton, Lord C.	Reid, Sir J. R.		
Hanmer, Sir J.	Reid, Col.		
Hatton, Capt. V.	Rumbold, C. E.		
Hawes, B.	Russell, Lord J.		
Hayes, Sir E.	Russell, Lord E.		
Heathcoat, J.	Russell, J. D. W.		
Hill, Lord M.	Ryder, hon. G. D.		
Hindley, C.	Sandon, Visct.		
Hobhouse, rt. hon. Sir J.	Scott, Robert		
Hogg, J. W.	Serape, G. P.		
Holland, R.	Seymour, Lord		
Hope, G. W.	Seymour, Sir H. B.		
Hornby, John	Sheridan, R. B.		
Howard, hon. C. W. G.	Smith, Benj.		
Howard, hon. E. G. G.	Smith, J. A.		
Howard, Sir R.	Smith, rt. hon. R. V.		
Hughes, W. H.	Smythe, hon. G.		
Hume, Joseph	Somers, J. P.		
Humphrey, Ald.	Somerset, Lord G.		
Hutt, W.	Somerville, Sir W. M.		
James, W.	Stansfield, W. R. C.		
James, Sir W. C.	Stuart, Lord J.		
Jermyn, Earl	Stuart, H.		
Joelyn, Visct.	Strutt, E.		
Johnstone, H.	Tancrer, H. W.		
Kelly, Sir F.	Thesiger, Sir F.		
Kelly, J.	Thornely, T.		
Labouchere, rt. hon. H.	Tomline, G.		
Langton, J. H.	Towneley, J.		
Lascelles, hon. W. S.	Trelawny, J. S.		
Layard, Capt.	Trench, Sir F. W.		
Legh, G. C.	Tuffnell, H.		
Lockhart, A. E.	Turner, E.		
Macaulay, rt. hon. T. B.	Vernon, G. H.		
McCarthy, A.	Villiers, hon. C.		
McGeachy, F. A.	Vivian, J. H.		
McNeill, D.	Vivian, hon. Capt.		
McTaggart, Sir J.	Wakley, T.		
Mahon, Visct.	Walker, R.		
		Allix, John P.	Hope, A.
		Arkwright, G.	Hudson, G.
		Astell, W.	Hurst, R. H.
		Bagge, W.	Inglis, Sir R. H.
		Bagot, hon. W.	Jolliffe, Sir W. G. H.
		Bailey, J.	Knight, F. W.
		Baillie, W.	Knightley, Sir C.
		Baikes, G.	Law, hon. C. E.
		Benett, P.	Lawson, A.
		Bentineck, Lord G.	Lennox, Lord G. H. G.
		Bentineck, Lord H.	Mackenzie, T.
		Borthwick, P.	Mackenzie, W. F.
		Bramston, T. W.	Macleod, D.
		Briseoe, M.	Manners, Lord J.
		Broadley, H.	March, Earl of
		Broadwood, H.	Maunsell, T. P.
		Brooke, Lord	Maxwell, hon. J. P.
		Bruce, C. L. C.	Miles, P. W. S.
		Bruges, W. H. L.	Miles, W.
		Buck, L. W.	Neeld, J.
		Buller, Sir J. Y.	O'Brien, A. S.
		Campbell, Sir H.	Packe, C. W.
		Cayley, E. S.	Palmer, R.
		Chandos, Marq. of	Palmer, G.
		Cholmondeley, hon. H.	Pigot, Sir R.
		Churchill, Lord A. S.	Rashleigh, W.
		Clifton, J. T.	Rendlesham, Lord
		Compton, H. C.	Repton, G. W. J.
		Disraeli, B.	Richards, R.
		Douglas, Sir H.	Scott, hon. F.
		Douglas, J. D. S.	Seymour, H. K.
		Duncombe, hon. A.	Shaw, rt. hon. F.
		Duncombe, hon. O.	Shirley, E. J.
		Du Pré, C. G.	Shirley, E. P.
		Farnham, E. B.	Sibthorp, Col.
		Fellowes, E.	Smyth, Sir H.
		Filmer, Sir E.	Sotheron, T. H. S.
		Finch, G.	Spooner, R.
		Fitzmaurice, hon. W.	Stanley, E.
		Floyer, J.	Stuart, J.
		Forbes, W.	Taylor, J. A.
		Fox, S. L.	Thompson, Ald.
		Fuller, A. E.	Tollennache, J.
		Gaskell, J. Milnes	Trollope, Sir J.
		Gooch, E. S.	Turnor, C.
		Grogan, E.	Tyrell, Sir J. T.
		Halford, Sir H.	Vyse, R. H. R. H.
		Hall, Col.	Waddington, H. S.
		Halsey, T. P.	Walpole, S. H.
		Harris, hon. Capt.	Walsh, Sir J. B.
		Heathcote, G. J.	Williams, T. P.
		Heathcote, Sir W.	Worcester, Marq. of
		Henley, J. W.	Yorke, hon. E. T.
		Hildyard, T. B. T.	TELLERS.
		Hinde, J. H.	Beresford, Major
		Hope, Sir J.	Newdegate, C. N.

List of the NOES.

Resolution agreed to.
Bills ordered to be brought in.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

*Monday, March 23, 1846.*CORN IMPORTATION BILL—SECOND
READING.

The Order of the Day for the Second Reading of the Corn Importation Bill was then read.

SIR R. PEEL: Sir, I have two petitions to present to the House; one from Liverpool, in which the petitioners state that the commercial interests of the country are materially prejudiced by the delay of the Legislature in pronouncing a decision in regard to the commercial measures now before them. I am assured that no petition ever left Liverpool more respectably signed; that it received the signatures of the leading men of all political parties; and that some of them are those of gentlemen who have been opposed to our measures, but who now give in their adhesion to the proposals of the Government. The petition received in the course of a few hours 414 signatures of the leading gentlemen in Liverpool. Every banking-house in Liverpool, I am told, but with three exceptions, has signed it; the managing directors of two of these being out of town. About 214 merchants and ship-owners, and 190 brokers, have signed. The petition, which states that the petitioners, having the most extensive experience, find that nearly every branch of trade is paralysed by the delay in carrying the measures of the Government. It further states—

"That your petitioners, while they disclaim all interference with due deliberation in matters of such vast importance, would humbly pray that an end may be put to their suspense by passing into a law, as speedily as possible, the measures proposed by Her Majesty's Government, and which your petitioners verily believe will prove highly beneficial to the interests of this vast commercial Empire."

The other petition is from Manchester. This received its signatures in twenty-four hours, and has 1,122 signatures attached to it. It is signed by all the bankers in Manchester, and by fifty-five members of the town council. It is also signed by most of the large houses engaged in the manufacturing and spinning trade, in the machine-making in the country trade, and in the East and West Indian, Canadian, United States, German, Russian, and Mediterranean trades. I am informed that the amount of capital represented by the houses who have signed this petition is

30,000,000*l.* and that the number of persons employed by them is 120,000. The petitioners state that—

"In common with the entire manufacturing and commercial interests of the country, they have observed with the liveliest satisfaction the wise and comprehensive measures introduced by Her Majesty's Government—measures which will tend greatly to benefit this densely-populated district."

The petitioners, therefore, pray the House

"To put an end to the doubt and uncertainty now existing, and to prevent the occurrence of commercial disasters which may seriously cripple the industry and resources of the country, by immediately passing into a law the Customs and Corn Importation Act."

On the Question that the Bill be now read a Second Time,

MR. E. YORKE said, he might well have been deterred by the difficulty of this subject from taking such a prominent part in it; but he was warned by the petition which he held in his hand, signed as it had been by an immense number of his most influential constituents interested in agriculture, not as he had heretofore done, to give a silent vote upon the question, lest the truth of the opinion he held, as to the principle of protection, should be brought into doubt, and the sincerity of the professions he had made be suspected. His intention was to move, that this Bill be read a second time that day six months. If hon. Gentlemen on his side the House felt as he did, he would entreat them not to be deterred by what had taken place, but that every form of the House should be used, every rule which the forms of Parliament suggested, should be adopted in order to defeat this measure. In approaching this subject he must say, that he preferred experience to conjecture—that which they knew to that which they were taught. He thought that a matter of such deep importance to the people of this country as the providing them with a cheap supply of food should not be treated as matter of hypothetical speculation. If one link of their speculations should fail—if one postulate should not answer their anticipations—if the deductions which they drew should be scarcity and famine, instead of plenty, they would have committed a grievous error, which a life of repentance, however sincere, could not sufficiently atone for. He rejected the Bill because it was a step taken to overturn a principle which had hitherto been recognised invariably by the people of this country as identified with its best interests—because issue had been joined with regard to it on a late occasion

with the antagonist party in the State when that principle was recognised and adopted by a large majority of the constituency—who returned a majority of their representatives in favour of that principle—and made those who now sat on the Treasury bench, the organs or conservators of it. He objected to the Bill, because it was intended to repeal a law which was based upon that principle of protection, and which its authors proclaimed to be intended to give the people, irrespective of class interest—independent of the remunerative price to the farmers—the first necessities of life at a cheap rate: he found that the price which now obtained in this country, and which had obtained for some time, was precisely that which was calculated by the right hon. Baronet as the price that marked abundance and sufficiency, instead of scarcity; and he believed that so great was the skill and enterprise of the people of this country, that the present law, if it had not been interfered with, would in a short time have repealed itself, to the great advantage of this country. But they were told that this law was an error—that the time of repentance was now come, and that the recantation of this error was the only thing that was necessary for the prosperity of this nation. But was it possible, he would ask, that that could be an error in 1846, which was denied to be so in 1842? Was that to be called an error, in a time of great commercial prosperity and general contentment, which was denied to be so in a period of great manufacturing depression? If the result of this measure in 1842 were sedition and discontent, why did they not then attempt to conciliate the affections of the people, by giving up this obnoxious law? It had been stated, in the course of these debates, that no apprehensions were entertained by the agricultural body. Now, he represented a district which was entirely and purely agricultural, and from his position having had on many occasions to defend the political honour of the right hon. Gentleman—which he did with as much zeal as he would have defended his own private integrity—he had been placed at issue, on more occasions than one, with the body which he represented; and he knew pretty well what their sentiments were on this occasion. The district he represented was about twenty miles in extent, with about 300,000 acres, which was originally one vast morass, inhabited by the winged denizens of the moor and by lawless men;

but now it was a happy and fertile district, being one of the greatest corn-growing districts in the kingdom, as authentic returns would show. To obtain this agricultural eminence they had to contend with great natural disadvantages, both by land and water; and to surmount these difficulties, he was informed that not less than five millions sterling had been laid out upon the land. That amount had been laid out in the faith that protection would be continued. But for that the lands would never have been cultivated. He urged this particularly with a view to show that the charge of laziness and indolence brought against the agricultural body was not an honest nor a fair charge. Even now the annual expenditure upon that land was about 80,000*l.*, the local taxes for that purpose varying from 3*s.* to 20*s.* in the pound. This was not done to enhance the value of the land—it was done for the sake of security, for there was not a moment in which the waters of the district might not inundate them, and destroy not only the hopes of the agriculturist, but all the benefits which were at present conferred upon the country through the civilization and cultivation of the district. He had received several letters upon this subject from men practically acquainted with the subject, with which he must trouble the House, in order to show how the measure would affect them if the prices were reduced, which he could show would be the case, not perhaps this year or the next, because the employment of railways had placed an increased consumption of food within every man's reach; but when this enormous demand for labour was withdrawn, and the labour market had returned to its former level, then the trial of this measure would come, and it would be for them and for the world to judge whether it were successful. One gentleman with whom he was well acquainted, said, that the effect of this measure would be to reduce rents one half, and that it would destroy the tenants' capital to the extent of two-thirds. It was difficult to say how it would operate upon labour, as the drainage of the district must be maintained; but it would certainly be reduced to the extent of one-third. Another gentleman mentioned that he knew a farmer in the district who intended to drain a large portion of his farm this year; but he had stopped when he heard of Sir Robert Peel's propositions, as he was quite certain that if those measures passed, the

outlay would not be repaid. That farmer considered there would be no alteration of prices this year, though he did not believe there was such a deficiency as was apprehended; but if the harvest of next year should be an average one, the price of wheat would be 40s. to 45s. per quarter, labourers' wages would be reduced 2s. a week, and many would be altogether thrown out of employment. To show that there was great ground for apprehending a fall in the price of wheat, he might state that a gentleman who was well known in Gloucestershire, had recently mentioned that he had imported a quantity of white wheat from Odessa, which, after all expenses were paid, stood him in 37s. a quarter. Now, it was impossible for British agriculturists to compete with such prices as these. He found, from calculations made some years ago, when wheat was 56s. a quarter, that the cost of manual labour which entered into the growth of a quarter of wheat, from the time it was sown till it was brought to market, was 17s. 2d. a quarter. With regard to the burdens on land, he might state that he had received a letter from a gentleman, who had transferred his capital from this country to France, that he had obtained land as good as the generality of our northern soils; and that, under the four-course system, he found that the burdens on that land were only 21s. 6d. per acre. Now, it was well known that the burdens on land in this country amounted to 60s. per acre. He would ask, then, how was it possible for either landlord or tenant to farm his land under a system of unrestricted competition, when there was so much difference between this country and neighbouring ones? It had been asked what good had the farmers derived from protection? He thought what he had already stated was a sufficient answer to that question. But he recollected well, that in 1822 Dantzic wheat was selling at 30s. a quarter. The British farmer was, at that time, in a state of deep distress; but it was the protection against the introduction of this and other wheat that saved him from utter and entire ruin. In a pamphlet which was published by a gentleman whom he knew very well—one of the most practical farmers in the country—it was stated that the loss a farmer, on a farm of 400 acres, would sustain by protection was 347l. 12s. 8d., while his loss by free trade would be 826l. 9s. 3d., making a gain in favour of protection of

478l. 16s. 7d. a year. He had other calculations from other farmers, to the same effect; one of them in particular, showing that he would lose, by the proposed measure, about 95l. more than his entire rent, for which Sir Robert Peel offered, by way of compensation, about 1d. an acre. It had also been shown that the rate of mortality was greater at a time of a low price of corn than at other periods. Pauperism had been found, beyond the slightest possible doubt, to increase during a season of low prices. Mr. Tooke had also shown the effect of periods of low prices to have been inimical to property. Nor was it alone the records of modern times that showed this effect; for, in the records of the British Museum, in the Papers of Sir Simond D'Ewes, of the date of 1641, the same evils were spoken of. As regarded the operation of the intended measure, what he would ask, was the effect it was supposed it would produce? Was the measure intended to produce high prices or low prices? The intended object surely could not be the production of a high price, because that would not suit the views of the manufacturers. Still he had a right to conclude that the Ministry desired high prices, because their arguments went to support that point. Relaxation, they said, had shown an increase of price. They had quoted articles where relaxation of duty had caused the rise of price; but he could not avoid noticing that the Ministers, while quoting these articles, had most carefully abstained from naming corn, and had only noticed those articles which were capable of being manufactured. Now, if the Ministerial argument was correct, it should stand thus—that the relaxation of price tended to make articles dear, and that total removal tended to make them dear also. If the argument were applied to corn; the House would see the nature of the change that must follow, that was, if the argument were correct. But it was said, the aim of the change was to obtain a moderate price; but the answer to that would be found in the operation of the present law, which produced moderate prices. Therefore, the alteration of that law was not required; and, indeed, many hon. Members of that House had placed the whole question in its proper light. The hon. Member for Birmingham had said that protection had considerably supported labour. But he could quote another authority likely to be heard on one side of the House at least, no less a man than

Earl Fitzwilliam, a great agriculturist; and the opinion of the noble Lord was, that without protection the farmer would be ruined and the labourer starved. He (Mr. Yorke) should scarcely have thought it necessary to extend his observations; but as much of the introduction of the present measures might be attributable to a moneyed combination out of that House, he wished to say he should be ready to resist the attacks of that body as much as possible, and give his opposition to the measure of Corn Law repeal. He would refer to the feelings of the poor with respect to the anticipated measure. Did hon. Members of the House find themselves acquainted with the feelings of the poor classes? Many persons held the opinion, that nothing was to be dreaded from the feelings of the labourer. If such was the opinion, hon. Gentlemen were highly mistaken. On that question—the question of the feeling of the labourers—he had received a communication from a poor, but intelligent man, who said that in the neighbourhood from which he wrote, there was not a village in which the people were not ready to assert, by brute force, if necessary, their right to taste of the fruits of their own labour; and he added that every village in the vicinity was ripe for outrage at the first reduction of wages. The working classes, he it remembered, were well tutored by the press—by such papers as the *Dispatch*, and other publications of a similar nature. He assured the House that great apprehensions existed in the agricultural districts as to the effects of this measure; and he held the right hon. Gentlemen on the Treasury bench responsible for occasioning those apprehensions. It was too much for the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) to say, that he confessed his share in that responsibility, and to plead that such a confession should shield him from punishment. This was the first time he (Mr. Yorke) had ever heard that a confession of guilt was an indemnity against punishment. It was true that the fact of confession was often taken into consideration by a Judge, and, combined with proof of previous good character, afforded a reason for mitigation of punishment; but this was the first time he had heard that a confession of guilt was a ground of exemption from punishment; and certainly the *arbitrarius* of the criminal law of this country ought to be the last person to introduce such a principle. He did not hesitate to say that, if this experiment should

fail, Her Majesty's Ministers would be exposed to the heavy and severe denunciation of those whom they had betrayed. A measure of this enormous change should not be allowed to become law without a searching investigation. Bad as the change would be on agriculture generally, what, he would inquire, would be the effect on the titheowner, whose income had been fixed upon the price of corn some years since. Look also at other relations. The Property Tax assessment reached 200,000,000*l.*; but this taxation had not been properly or fairly distributed. A fairer distribution, therefore, should be made of the burdens of this tax. All should bear taxation, and bear it equally, and, reminded by proceedings which sometimes took place in a locality in the county he represented, he would say, if the House would permit him, that the nation should be handicapped, and the burdens it had to bear be placed on those who were able to bear them, in order that all might start fairly upon the great national race they were appointed to run. The whole fiscal regulations should be changed if the present measure passed, and abundant reasons existed for a sweeping change of this character. A well-known public writer, Mr. John Macgregor, stated, that the Excise law, as it stood, might be changed for the good of the nation at large, as also the poor and other laws now pressing so heavily on the community. He would not therefore give his support to the measure of the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government without a complete remodelling of taxation. When the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) the Member for the city of London, in 1829, first brought forward his plan of a fixed duty, the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department, referring to the Tithe Commutation Act, told the noble Lord that if, when he passed that Act, he had any intention of altering the basis on which it was framed, he was guilty of a gross fraud on the public. And now, adopting the same language, he would tell Her Majesty's Ministers, if, in 1842, when the Corn Bill of that year was passed, they had any intention of altering the basis on which it was framed—and he had come to the conclusion that they had all along been arguing against their convictions—they were guilty of a gross fraud on the country. He wished hon. Gentlemen opposite joy of their new allies on the Treasury benches. They would use them for the purpose of striking this one blow, and when struck

they would discard them, having no trust in the metal of which they were composed. The right hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Treasury looked to posterity for indemnity, and no doubt the pen of the faithful historian would do him justice. The historian would say of him, that, gifted with great natural and possessing many acquired powers, notwithstanding some slight deviation in former years from the straight course of political wisdom, he was again trusted on account of his professions by a great party, whom he again deceived. He would say that he stood alone against the party he had betrayed;—

“He stood alone amidst his band,
Without one trusting heart or hand.”

In conclusion, he begged to move that the Bill be read a second time that day six months.

SIR J. Y. BULLER hoped the House would not think he was intruding on its time, if, on the present occasion, he occupied it for a few minutes. In the year 1842, he supported the proposals of the Government, and he had done so because he had felt that it was for the advantage of the country; and he had believed that those interests which had been then affected, would not again be subjected to change. Certainly he had presumed that no further alteration would take place while the right hon. Baronet continued in office. When he had heard of further alterations, he had deeply deprecated them. He felt the greatest disappointment that further change should have been meditated, nor had he yet recovered from his disappointment, though taking the course he intended to take. The hon. Member who had just addressed the House, had stated that the constituencies of the country feared the prospect of change. He assured the House that such was the state of feeling in the district which he had the honour to represent. The measure would create a great alteration in the management of estates and farms. Many would suffer. He did not mean to say that farmers who held large tracts of land were men likely to feel distress, because they were men of capital, and perhaps by the aid of skill and industry would occupy nearly the same position after the expiration of three years as at present. If landed proprietors did not suffer, they would only avoid it by a change in the management of their estates, and by keeping down their outgoings to a very low degree. One of the largest expenses on an estate was

the keeping of farming buildings in repair. This, however, could not be followed if this measure passed into a law. One effect of the change would be to make small farms great. It would not be attended by any good result to say that men ejected from a farm could go to the manufacturing districts and there earn their bread. To change the occupation of the mind or body, even in the time of youth, was difficult; but to force a man to do so at forty years of age was but to deliver him over to misfortune and misery. But why had the measure been introduced? It was not because trade had declined. He looked for a reason, and he found it had been stated that a partial destruction of the food of the Irish people had taken place. It would have tended better to have cured a temporary difficulty had the ports been opened, and corn admitted to feed the people, than counselling the introduction of a measure the full effect of which would not be fully felt for some years. The titheowners would be injured, and the agriculturists would be injured; the measure would be fraught with injury, while to the people of Ireland it would afford no effectual relief.

MR. M'GEACHY could not shelter himself under the wing of that most extraordinary doctrine which had been laid down by the noble Lord the Member for Liverpool, a doctrine mischievous in proportion to the respectability and weight of the quarter from which it had proceeded. Surely it was as individuals that they were responsible, and not as Members of any one sect or party. It might be true that every man in England who had sat in Her Majesty's Councils as a Cabinet Minister, with scarcely an exception, was now agreed as to the impolicy of continuing the existing Corn Laws. Still that would be no justification of his vote in favour of this measure, unless he were himself convinced, as convinced he was, that the measure was in itself both politic and just. In the exercise of an unfettered and dispassionate judgment, and with an earnest and most anxious desire to arrive at a just conclusion upon the subject, he approached the consideration of this important question. Having voted for those alterations in the Tariff which were equally with the present measures of the Government objected to by the protectionist party, and having seen the good effects produced by those alterations, he confessed that he thought there was every encouragement to proceed in the

same course, and to attend to that recommendation in the Speech from the Throne which was directly controverted by the Amendment now before the House. The question was not merely of importance in its commercial bearings—a light in which it was too exclusively regarded by the hon. Member for Durham and his associates, but, now that it had been involuntarily proposed to that House by the present Ministry, of still greater importance in its political bearing. It was necessary to look at the question in both points of view; and first for the political part of the case, the importance of which he frankly admitted could not be overrated. In a free country, there was no evil so great, in his opinion, as a loss of confidence on the part of the people in public men. Were there nay, he would ask, amongst those who declaimed so noisily on these topics now, who had ever reconsidered a vote, or rescinded a decision, in order to maintain in office a Minister, who, as they deemed, would guarantee the maintenance of the existing Corn Laws? He never supported the Minister in the moment of his power when he thought him wrong, and that was a strong reason why he should not withhold his support from him now, in the moment of his weakness, when he thought him right. His belief was, that instead of a loss of confidence in public men, a fair and calm consideration of the course which had been taken during the last few months would, when the heat of party had subsided, go far to raise the character of public men, and to rekindle once more feelings of confidence in the integrity of statesmen. What were the simple facts of the case? Impressed with the belief that, with an impending scarcity in Ireland, and in the general circumstances of the country, some prompt remedy and some important alterations in our commercial policy were indispensable, the First Minister of the Crown took a step which was, in his judgment, worthy of the responsibilities of his office, and worthy of the Minister of a great country. On the 1st of November, 1845, he recommended to his Colleagues the opening of the ports for the admission of foreign grain. In that proposal the Cabinet did not agree, and the consequence was the resignation of the Ministry. The difficulty of dealing with the Corn Laws might have been evaded by throwing up office in the first instance; but this, with the prospect of impending scarcity in Ireland, the right hon. Gentleman honourably

declined, until he had tried the expedient of the opening of the ports with his own Cabinet. Having failed in this, he resigned office. He gave no opinion as to a successor. But, to use his own words—

“I thought it unfair and dishonourable, under the impression that the noble Lord the Member for London would be the Minister, not to take those steps which I thought would diminish his embarrassments.”

On the 6th of December the Ministry resigned; on the 8th of December the right hon. Gentleman wrote a letter to Her Majesty—

—“offering the assurance of his perfect readiness to support, if proposed by others, those measures which he had himself deemed necessary.”

And he further added, with a solicitude for the public service most worthy of imitation—

“That with regard to any increased estimates which the position of the country might render necessary, he would assume any degree of responsibility, present or retrospective, which could fairly attach to him.”

Those who could take a dispassionate view of the case, and would endeavour to place themselves in the position of the right hon. Baronet—a position encompassed with enormous difficulties—on the 1st of November, 1845, would not pass any harsh judgment upon the course pursued by him on that occasion. It was mighty easy to be statesmen after the fact—to magnify the claims of party above the interests of the country; but he thought he was perfectly justified in saying that, with his views of impending scarcity in Ireland, and of the advantages to be derived from a change of policy to the Empire at large, whatever might have been the seeming consistency of a proposal to maintain the existing Corn Laws, that proposal would have been the real treachery which you imputed to him, because he had thought it for their interests and for the interests of all to relieve them from the odium of stipulating for those restrictions in such a moment of pressure. There was but one point in the conduct of the political leaders on this question which he viewed with regret, and that was the somewhat unfair position which the noble Lord the Member for London, and the Whig party generally, had assumed for themselves during the course of these debates. They must remember that they were themselves protectionists up to a very late period, as well as those who sat on the other side of the House. But now, what were the alternatives proposed by the opponents of the Go-

vernment? Their first proposal was a dissolution of the present Parliament. Now, this was a very good subject for declamation, and he had heard of it before. Why, he recollected that when the Government brought in their Bill for the endowment of the Roman Catholic College of Maynooth in the last Session of Parliament, just the same language was held as to the violation of pledges. Such a precedent once set would lead to the most dangerous consequences. What would be the practical results? Would such a course ensure the calm, dispassionate, deliberate adjustment of conflicting claims on this or any other important question? Why, the result would be this, that you would have the country governed one year by Exeter Hall and the Anti-Maynooth Conference Committee, and the next by No. 17, Old Bond-street, and the Central Protection Society and its affiliated branches. Both to the electors and the elected the evil tendency of such a system would become more clearly apparent from the present embarrassment of many representatives and of many constituencies. Public men in England would henceforth be content to pledge themselves to do their duty, according to their view of the merits of every question as it was proposed for their consideration; and the electors would remember the advice of a great statesman, no mean authority on questions of constitutional right—Mr. Burke—who declared, that—

“They are not under a false show of liberty, but in truth to exercise an unnatural, inverted domination, tyrannically to exact from those who officiated in the State, not an entire devotion to their interests, which is their right, but an abject submission to their occasional will, extinguishing thereby, in all those who serve them, all moral principle, all sense of dignity, all use of judgment, all consistency of character, whilst, by the very same process, they give themselves up, a proper, a suitable, but a most contemptible prey to the servile ambition of popular sycophants, or courtly flatterers.”

There was one resignation which had been both offered and accepted on the present occasion, which furnished a deplorable commentary on the justice of that view. If one man more than another in that House had shown an entire devotion to the public interest—to the cause of the suffering and helpless, wherever they were to be found, that man was the noble Lord (Lord Ashley) who for so many years represented the county of Dorset in Parliament. That noble Lord stood in no need of praise; his name would long live in the best affections

of his countrymen; but that cause would hardly commend itself to the hearts of the people of England (and he thanked God that he did not feel it to be his duty to defend it) which involved in its maintenance the exclusion of such a man as Lord Ashley from Parliament. The other alternative proposed by the opponents of the Government was a compromise apparently in the shape of a fixed duty. Now, that appeared to him the most curious expedient for getting out of a difficulty that ever entered the mind of man. Why, the proposal of a fixed duty on corn by the Conservative party would involve precisely the greatest amount of political dishonesty that could by possibility be brought to bear upon the question. Why, this was precisely the point and pith of their contest with the Whig party at the election of 1841, so far as that contest turned upon the question of the Corn Laws, the merits of the sliding scale as against the fixed duty. How could they, having deliberately made choice of the sliding scale, now that that scale had slid from under them—how could they with common decency come forward now, and propose a fixed duty when that measure was repudiated by its own parents? Where was the man to be found who would boldly come forward and propose to the country the formation of an Administration on the basis of a permanent fixed duty on the importation of foreign corn? The protectionist party complained of the tortuous and ambiguous policy of the right hon. Gentleman. Now, he asked them what was their own?

“—*Mutato nomine, de to
Fabula narratur.*”

Was there any man among them bold enough to stand by the sliding scale? Would they support the Amendment of the hon. Member for Pontefract? The strongest arguments in favour of some change in our present policy was to be drawn from the social position of the country under the existing laws, and more especially from the condition of those for whose especial benefit it was said those laws ought to be maintained. The attack and the defence of the Corn Laws now rested alike on zeal for the good of the poor, and on an enlightened regard for the interests of the great body of the people. It was to be regretted that, in these days, the science of political economy, most important as it was, had come to be confounded too much with the science of government, that more

comprehensive science which an eminent writer had so well described in saying—

"We may lay it down that the popular counsel given in our days to Governments is continually to favour the development of industry; it is to this point that we are now to make all our studies converge. But, according to our views, it is to higher objects that Government should direct its aims; it is upon the whole of what constitutes the national well-being; it is upon the relations, upon the proportions which ought to exist between different conditions, between different classes of citizens, in order that they may mutually aid each other, that all may supply the wants the one of the other; that all may unite hope to the feeling of security; that all, in short, may be enabled, by the development of their energies, to enjoy activity in calm."

Now, a good law must surely have produced good effects on the condition of the labourer. We allowed the state of the manufacturing operative to be precarious, that it must still remain such, after they had made this alteration in the Corn Laws; but those who were answerable for his condition were now tenfold more answerable from the tone adopted in the Anti-Corn-Law agitation; they asked them to assent to an alteration of these laws; and, if evil should ensue, they would make them heavily responsible by the projected alteration in the law of settlement for such contingent evil. He did not say—for he did not believe—that the Corn Law had produced the existing state of things; but could that law be defended by a reference to the state of the agricultural labourers? The extremeness of their wages, the difficulty of living, were so notorious as to make it a common expression, "It is a wonder how they live;" and so it was; and so it was also in 1789 with the peasantry of France, as any one might see who would consult the instructive pages of Arthur Young upon the subject. They knew what occurred in the one case: was it patriotic, or wise, or statesmanlike, to shut our eyes to the possible consequences of our own neglect in the other? He would notice one circumstance, which made a deep and lasting impression on his mind. In the month of July, 1844, the then Bishop of Ely addressed a letter to his clergy, in which he said—

"The accounts received of incendiary fires in Suffolk are so alarming that I feel it my duty to call the attention of the clergy of my diocese in that country to this distressing state of things. At one of the late fires in Suffolk, it is reported that there were great crowds of women and children who jeered the men who were laudably engaged in working the engines; and, as the different parts of the roof gave way, and the flames burst forth with greater violence, they showed their gratification by loud cheering. I am sure that this communi-

cation will be read with great sorrow by every conscientious parish priest, and will prove to him the necessity for increased exertions to check this flagrant wickedness."

Now, whatever difference of opinion might exist as to the cause, no doubt existed as to the fact of this awful occurrence.

"Causa latet—vis est notissima."

Since he had read that letter, nothing but his feelings of deference to the knowledge of the right hon. Gentleman on questions of commercial policy would ever have extracted from him a vote in favour of maintaining the existing Corn Laws. He must be a bold man indeed, who would now, in the teeth of such a fact as that—and it was not an isolated fact—and in the teeth of the unanimous assent of all the leading statesmen of England, maintain a system of laws for the special benefit of the agricultural peasantry, which, to say the very least, had co-existed with such a state of things as that described in the letter quoted from the Prelate who, only eighteen months ago, presided over the diocese of Ely. It was a most fallacious argument to adduce, that the state of the poor in this country was no worse than it was in other countries. The real question was, what was their relative position with reference to the rich? Had they advanced in their comforts in proportion to the advances made by the classes above them? When the inequalities of social condition in a nation became too great, all history taught but one fearful lesson as to the result. It was very easy to talk of our Constitution as a territorial Constitution; yet the men who now talked most loudly of the rights of electors were, in many cases, the very men who had degraded that most important class—the tenant farmers of England—into the mere political tools of their party purposes. And he confessed, that in coming to a conclusion upon that question, the old Spanish proverb had had considerable weight with him,—“Show me your friends, and I will tell you what you are;” and when he looked to the friends of the Government on the present occasion, what did he find! Was my Lord Talbot, for example, resident amongst the undrained lands and the agricultural helots of the county of Buckingham? Or were many other enlightened agriculturists, who supported these measures, answerable for the condition of Sussex, where a large farmer told a friend of his (Mr. McGeachy’s) the other day, as they were looking at a field in which there was a lamentable preponderance of thistles

over turnips, "that he must own he had been very unfortunate in his turnips this year, but that for his part he never saw any harm come of thistles?" It only remained for him to express his earnest hope that, when that measure had passed, they should proceed to other measures calculated to meet the wants of the great mass of the people, their moral and intellectual, as well as their physical wants; and, looking at the state of some of our great manufacturing towns, he thought that there was now a noble opportunity for employing that enormous fund of the Anti-Corn-Law League, now likely to be useless for the purposes for which it was raised, in erecting some peaceful trophy of their victory, and for identifying the names of their leaders, not with the remembrance of a temporary and evanescent and most questionable agitation, but with some permanent establishments for the relief of the poor, the destitute, and the oppressed. For these and other reasons he had come, after full and earnest thought upon the subject, to the conclusion that it was the course most consistent with the duty he owed to the constituency he represented, with the duty he owed to the great interests of the country, and with that duty which he owed to his own personal honour, to give his cordial and earnest support to the measures now proposed by Her Majesty's Government; convinced as he was that they were measures which would tend to promote the general welfare of all classes of the community, and place the future greatness and prosperity of this Empire upon the one sole foundation upon which that greatness and that prosperity could securely rest—namely, the loyal affections of a contented and confiding people.

MR. PACKE observed, that the hon. Member who had last addressed the House expressed a hope with respect to the appropriation of the funds of the Anti-Corn-Law League. He, however, believed that those funds had been raised for the purpose of agitation, and that they never would be applied to any other purpose. Much as he admired the tact and ability of the right hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Treasury, and often as he had supported him upon the other side of the House, and frequently upon this (the Ministerial) side of the House, yet he was compelled to say he had not as yet heard a single argument adduced in favour of a repeal of the Corn Laws. The present state of Ireland had been alluded to as a reason for the pro-

posal of the present measure affecting corn; but he, for one, declared that he could see no connexion between a remedy for the distresses of the people of Ireland, and the total repeal of the Corn Laws on the 1st day of February, 1849. The right hon. Baronet had maintained that another powerful argument in favour of free trade was to be found in the national prosperity that had existed for the past three years under the system of relaxed duties. The hon. Member who had just sat down also remarked, that the consequences of such relaxation had been so encouraging that he was prepared to record his vote in favour of still further reductions. Why, did not the hon. Member know that the prosperity of the past three years had been in consequence of that very protection which it was now sought to abolish? Nevertheless, that prosperity was adduced as an argument in favour of free trade. This prosperity had likewise been brought about by the prosperous harvest, and the increased production of the land under an improved system of agriculture. But if the law of 1842 was now to be altered, faith would be broken with the farmers, who had invested their capital, believing that protection would be extended to the produce of their industry. When they were told that they might improve their land, and thus obtain great benefit from the measures of free trade, he must say, that they might be pushed too far, and that they could not improve their land by the same process that they improved their manufacturing system. When the noble Lord the Member for London visited Glasgow, he told his auditory there that the right hon. Baronet had treated the agricultural party with great unkindness, for he had left them to speak for themselves. But he thought, when that noble Lord went back to Glasgow, he would be able to tell them that the agricultural party, both by the number and the excellence of their speeches, had defended themselves pretty well. But he agreed with the noble Lord that the right hon. Gentleman had treated his supporters with great unkindness. If he had told his supporters last December what he was going to do, they would not have committed themselves so much as they did, and certain hon. Friends of his would not have lost their seats in this House if they had known the views of the right hon. Baronet. They had been often told that they ought not to refer to old speeches, as these were altogether beside the question. Now it was

very well for hon. Gentlemen opposite to complain of their finding fault with Government for having deserted them; but he should be glad to know, if the hon. Member for Stockport or the hon. Member for Durham, were to get up and declare that they had been converted to the cause of protection, would not Covent Garden ring with astonishment and indignation? The election of South Nottingham, and the rejection of Lord Lincoln, was one proof of the feelings of the agriculturists towards the Government. Another was the meeting which was held at Loughborough, on the borders of South Notts, where strong resolutions were passed, and much indignation expressed by the agriculturists at the measures proposed by Government. If a general election were to take place, there would be the greatest possible distrust of the Government and of all public men whatever. He objected to the measure, because as yet he had heard no reason for its adoption; and he believed its effect would be seriously and vitally injurious to the best interests of the country. He objected to it, secondly, because it was a breach of faith with the constituencies of the Empire—and above all, he objected to it because, in the words of a late member of the Cabinet—a nobleman who was not only noble by birth, but noble by his political character, he objected to it because he could not support the Government without a violation of his consistency and honour.

MR. FOX MAULE hoped the House would allow him to make a few observations upon this question. He did so from feeling it was right that those who were connected solely with the landed property of the country, and who had nothing else to look to, ought to state the grounds upon which they supported the proposition of Her Majesty's Government. He could not say of that proposition that it had his entire and cordial approval, because it did not go to the extent he wished it to proceed. It fell short of that which he considered requisite to remedy the difficulties it was proposed to meet; but nevertheless, such as it was, he for one accepted it with gratitude, and he should endeavour to give it his most cordial support. He had listened to the hon. Gentleman who proposed the Amendment, and he confessed he felt some difficulty in accounting for the statement he had made with reference to the feelings this measure had created, not only in the breasts of landlords, but in the breasts of farmers and agricultural labourers on this

side the Tweed. It had been his duty, ever since the measure had been proposed, to investigate the feelings which existed towards it in that country, and among that class to which he more immediately belonged; and he had no hesitation in publicly declaring that the result of that investigation had been this—not only was there no panic among the landlords, or among the farmers, but, in spite of all that had been said, agricultural arrangements were proceeding with an increased activity from day to day. He would state to the House, in reference to the observations which had fallen from the other side, a practical example of that which he had mentioned. When this proposition was first made, a document was laid before a public meeting emanating from one to whom, however he might have sometimes differed upon the means he took to advocate this question, he had no hesitation in saying the country was under a very deep debt of gratitude for his exertions. He meant the hon. Member for Stockport. The letter which that hon. Gentleman addressed to the farmers of the kingdom, shortly after this measure was proposed, had been widely canvassed in his county, at many of the largest markets there; and within ten days after the right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government had developed his measures, the farmers, who he would not say were in the first instance anxious for them, but after having seen and heard the arguments in their support in that letter, they came to the conclusion, that instead of being put off for three years, their interests would have been best consulted had the abolition of the Corn Laws taken place at once. Such was his own conclusion; and he must say, that he looked with regret upon the proposed measure of the Government, because it contained provisions for maintaining the present Corn Laws for a further period of three years; and he also looked with regret upon the time which had already intervened since the right hon. Gentleman had proposed this measure, and which he feared must yet intervene before even the measure of the right hon. Gentleman could be carried into effect. He could not but remember that on the 1st of November last the right hon. Gentleman had proposed, on account of the apprehended scarcity both in Ireland and in this country, to open the ports for the free admission of foreign grain. We had now arrived at nearly the end of March, and still there was no decided pro-

spect of even the partial remedy of Her Majesty's Government being carried through that House of Parliament. He certainly had anticipated, and had hoped, before that House should separate for the Easter recess, that the measure would at any rate have passed that tribunal; but he regretted to think that, during the next week, they were to have mixed up with that debate another subject of the deepest importance to a neighbouring country; and the experience which he had had of Irish debates forbade him to hope that the present measure would be read a third time in that House before the Easter recess. Under all the circumstances, he could not anticipate that before the end of May at least, any advantage could be expected to accrue from it. He could not find fault with the length of time which the discussion of that subject had already occupied; for every one had a right fully to speak upon so important a subject, particularly if he felt that his interests were affected. The landlords had stated that it was a question in which they were deeply concerned. He (Mr. F. Maule) must say he believed that in his county the interests of the landlords would be as safe after this measure should become law, as they were at present; and he not only believed that the alarm which they expressed now was groundless, but he was surprised at the conduct of many of those who had, if he might use the expression, the very groundlessness of it under their own immediate eyes. He knew one noble Lord who had withdrawn his proxy from the Government, and had given it to the noble Duke who led the protectionist party in another place; and yet he knew at the same time that ten days after the right hon. Baronet had made his proposal known to the country, the noble Lord had let two farms upon his own property at an increased rental. He stated the fact, because one fact was worth a bushel of arguments. One farm was renewed for a period of nineteen years. Previously the rent was 480*l.* a year. Ten days after the right hon. Baronet's proposal was made known, a rent was offered for the ensuing nineteen years of 570*l.* per annum; being an increase of 90*l.* a year. Hitherto the rent had been paid half in grain and half in money; the whole increase of rent was conditioned to be paid exclusively in money. The other farm was let within a few days afterwards. He was not acquainted with the precise details; but he was within the mark when he stated that it had been let

at an increased rent of 20 per cent. He had consulted nearly the whole of the land agents in the large county of Perth, and they could not inform him of one single instance within their knowledge where the lease of a farm having expired, the offers on it had not risen, and the increased offers had not been accepted by the landlords. He observed that a few days ago a petition had been presented in another place from the county of Haddington, against the proposed measures of the Government; and yet he knew that, so far from having been depressed in value, a farm in that county had not many days ago been let upon a new lease at the enormous price of five guineas an acre. These facts concurred to make him think that if the whole agricultural interest of Scotland were fairly to consider the proposed measures, the result would be that they would look forward to the issue of the principles of free trade as to one which would enable them to stand in a much improved condition with reference to the other classes of the community. He looked upon those measures of Her Majesty's Government as calculated to soothe and calm the feelings of irritation which might exist in our own community; but he looked also upon those measures of commercial freedom, as calculated to reach to a far greater extent, and to secure peace between nations and throughout the world. Let them look to America, and he would ask to what did they attribute the changed tone of America? He attributed it, first, to the calm and dignified manner in which all parties in this country had treated the subject in dispute; but he equally ascribed it to those measures of freedom of trade and commercial liberty which had emanated from Her Majesty's Government, and which he was sure would be found by all parties, whether extended to America or to any other country on the face of the globe, to be their best security for peace, whilst they would eventually secure to this country an abundant supply of all articles which entered into the food and conduced to the comfort of the people.

Mr. CHOLMONDELEY, in venturing to offer to the House a very few remarks upon the important question which now occupied its attention, might perhaps be permitted to allude for one moment to a subject to which an hon. Member had referred; the allusion was to a subject which he had had no intention of introducing—a dissolution of Parliament upon this question. There might be many grave objec-

tions urged against such a course; but still he could not but think, in spite of those objections, that such a course would have been most safe and most advisable. He might be told that it would be unconstitutional and dangerous—that the House of Commons stood to the country in precisely the same relative position as an individual Member stood to his constituents, and that the same considerations which would prevent the Representative from consulting his constituents as to a particular vote, ought to withhold the House from appealing to the country on this particular question. All this he had no doubt was theoretically true; but how did the matter stand when we came to practical results? He thought it might be fairly illustrated by one particular case—the case of the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government. On one memorable occasion the right hon. Gentleman had felt it necessary to resign his trust into the hands of those who had committed it to him. He had told the House the other night that he then thought he had taken a wrong course. That night have been the case constitutionally; but did the right hon. Gentleman wish what he had done undone? He thought not. He had done it because he felt that honour and conscience required it; and for yielding to those dictates he was sure neither an individual Member nor that House would ever lose credit with the country. He thought that by the same dictates of honour and conscience the House was, even at this late period, bound to give the country an opportunity of pronouncing upon a measure which was so important to every one in the country. Surely if this measure was to become the law of the land, the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government would count his numbers with greater satisfaction, when he felt that he could not be accused of taking the country by surprise; and that the majority which enabled him to carry this measure was a majority (which he denied the present would be) which spoke the sense of the country. Having said thus much on this point, he might now perhaps be allowed to state in a very few sentences the reasons why with much regret he now found himself in opposition to the Government. He must say that he saw nothing in the state of the case, and heard nothing in the arguments which had been advanced, to change the opinions which he had always entertained on this subject. He might be met with state-

ments of distress, famine, and pestilence in Ireland, and asked if such matters were to be treated with levity. He did not believe that there was in this country any general feeling of indifference to the state of Ireland. But admitting even to their utmost extent the statements of present misfortune, and, going still further, admitting all the expected calamity, he still thought that the Irish emergency might have been met at a less price than that of a total revolution of the whole agricultural interest, as well as the whole home and foreign trade of the country. When he said revolution, he used the word in its literal sense, a turning over, an absolute alteration, for such it was; it was an absolute revolution for good or for evil: he trusted it might be for good; but suppose it were for evil—suppose the present measure, instead of relieving Irish misery, were but to superadd English to Irish distress—in what a position should we feel ourselves? And be it remembered that this measure, offering in case of failure so terrible an alternative, was brought forward, not at a moment of great national distress, of great depression of trade; it was not brought forward at an emergency when to avoid the certainty of impending ruin they must embrace the alternative of great possible calamity; on the contrary, it was proposed to them at a period of (with one exception) almost unexampled national prosperity; and with regard to that one exception, with regard to the Irish emergency, it surely would have been better met by the right hon. Baronet's original proposition of opening the ports. He knew that the proposition had once been negatived in the Cabinet; but he could not but think that the powers of persuasion of the right hon. Baronet, which had induced the Cabinet to co-operate in the larger measure, would have enabled him to carry the smaller; and as far as Ireland was concerned, that smaller measure, the temporary opening of the ports, would have afforded more effectual or more immediate relief, putting out of the question the inexpediency of meeting a temporary evil by a permanent enactment. And, as to the difficulty alluded to by the right hon. Baronet of closing the ports again after "the sweets of the absence of protection" had once been tasted, surely that was the most conclusive argument that could be adduced in favour of such a measure; for the degree to which "the sweets of the absence of protection" received the approval or disapproval of the country in general, would

furnish the strongest possible justification of the abolition, or reason for the continuance, of the present system of Corn Laws. So much for the state of the case. With respect to arguments, he had promised not to detain the House; and after the lengthened discussion that had taken place, he was not presumptuous enough to suppose that he could offer anything new upon the subject; but there was one point on which he wished to say a single word. In the course of his speech, the right hon. Baronet had endeavoured to prove that a low price of food and high wages went hand in hand, and adduced the last three years in support of his assertion; but the right hon. Gentleman totally passed over the fact, that, during the last three years there had been a cause in operation which, however beneficial, could not be considered as permanent, and, consequently, was not admissible into a calculation of that nature. He alluded to the immense number of railroads in process of construction. These produced an immense artificial and temporary demand for labour, and consequent increase in the rate of wages; whilst good harvests had produced a comparatively low price of food; both great blessings to the country, but neither of which could be counted on as permanent ones. He had, he must own, great confidence in the sagacity of the right hon. Gentleman; and he was also sure that the right hon. Gentleman had not brought forward any measure of the expediency of which he was not convinced. He was ready to admit, too, that, as far as the right hon. Gentleman had gone, his measures had worked well for the country. He trusted the results of the present measures might be good, for he liked to look at the bright side of every question. At the same time he could not but see that human nature was fallible. The right hon. Gentleman might be right; but then he might be wrong, and that, too, upon a matter of vital importance. With the exception of Irish distress, he believed the country to be in a state of great prosperity. Then, ought they to run this risk, and expose the country to a great danger? He had, he repeated, great confidence in the right hon. Baronet's sagacity, and on ordinary occasions would strain a point, or sacrifice an opinion, to support him; but he could not but feel that this was an enormous experiment; uncalled for by present emergencies; tried, not at a period of great national distress, but at a moment of al-

most unexampled national prosperity—an experiment that might, and he trusted would be, successful; but one whose failure would be so disastrous, that he could not undertake the responsibility of being one of those who helped to make this measure the law of the land. He trusted that in the few remarks he had ventured to make to the House, he had abstained entirely from all personalities, which had unfortunately prevailed but too much in these debates. A great cry had been got up, more out of that House than in it, against the right hon. Gentleman at the head of Her Majesty's Government. In this cry he did not participate, for, he said, that if ever there was a man who gave unequivocal proof of his sincerity, by his sacrifices, in bringing forward measures that he believed to be for the good of the country, it was the right hon. Gentleman. He could understand changing—honestly changing his opinion, and openly avowing that change; but that which he did not understand was men thinking one way and voting another. This, he said, was the real mischief—this it was that went far to destroy the bonds of union between the representative and his constituents—this it was which really destroyed the public confidence in public men. If we were to do this—if we were thus to

“—play fast and loose with faith,
And make unconstant children of ourselves,”

it would do more real mischief to the country, than all the Bills that ever were introduced into Parliament.

MR. H. VERNON said, that if, as it had been argued, Parliament was not in a state competent to judge of this measure, it was the duty of the House to address Her Majesty, praying Her to dissolve the Parliament; and if such an Amendment had been moved instead of that the Bill be read a second time that day six months, it would have been more consonant with the views expressed by hon. Gentlemen. He himself stood in a position of some peculiarity; for he was obnoxious to those shafts to which hon. Members were exposed who had heretofore been ranged on the side of protection, and who had felt compelled, by an imperative sense of duty, to take another course—a course which was not the most congenial to his sentiments, nor most accordant with his foregone conclusions. He had come down to the House the other night in the hope that a 5s. fixed duty would have found advocates in many hon. Gentlemen on the opposite benches. He

had always considered that a moderate fixed duty was the best for the agriculturists; but he had been compelled, like all public men, to act with a great body: it was no use to take up an "insulated" position when there was a vast number of important questions which attached a man to his party. Undoubtedly, in early life, he had never attached himself to the party of the First Lord of the Treasury; and he had not become his supporter till in 1836 he had seen the necessity of joining his standard; and, ever since, he had admired the wisdom and integrity of his course. The right hon. Baronet knew that he had never asked and had never received a favour from him—[Sir R. PEEL: Hear!]
—but he had given the right hon. Baronet his best support. With regard to the general question, he frankly stated, that for the last twenty years he had been of opinion that a 5s. duty would not throw any great impediment in the way of the interests of commerce, and would not injure the prosperity of the country, whilst it would stop the evils of speculation, and give, if not a protection, an assistance to the agriculturists; but he had always felt a difficulty, as a representative of an agricultural district, in reconciling his wish to defer to his constituents with the interests of the country. A fixed duty was not now attainable, and in supporting the present proposal he was under the conviction that he should suffer a loss of from five to ten per cent. in his rents. He did not hold that the protection which gave him this was a bane to agriculture; but if there were any truth in political economy it would prove ultimately to be a landlord's and not a tenant's question; and he felt bound to vote for the real interests of the poor, and for what would promote the industry of the country, and, ultimately, its prosperity, notwithstanding any private injury done to his own interests. He must say, also, that throughout America he had found but one feeling among the friends of peace, who said that if we would only interest, by prosperity, the Western States of America, which were invulnerable to our arms, and inaccessible to our commerce—for we had already the interests of the Eastern States in our favour—we should do more to promote the peace of America than all the concessions we should make in the Oregon or elsewhere. He had received a letter from a very intelligent merchant at Boston, who said that the effect of the proposed alteration in the Tariff would be

that England would completely fortify herself against all competition in manufactures. Again, it was not the experience of the three prosperous years of 1843, 1844, and 1845, but the experience of the three famine years of 1840, 1841, and 1842, that had convinced the right hon. Baronet of the inutility of the sliding scale; and it was upon those grounds he should support the second reading of this Bill.

CAPTAIN BERKELEY said, that he had entered that House believing that the Corn Laws, as they were then constituted, were for the good of the country, though he had always voted with the hon. Member for Wolverhampton for an inquiry into them, as he conceived that such an inquiry was just and right. However, when he found that the noble Lord whose political opinions had generally guided his own, united with the right hon. Gentleman opposite, who, he might say, was one of the greatest statesmen of his time, for one purpose, in which neither of them, especially the right hon. Gentleman, could have any personal interest, he, as a practical man, without pretending to understand, as some hon. Gentleman opposite had pretended to understand, political economy, felt himself bound to give way to the right hon. Baronet, and to vote in favour of this Bill.

SIR R. H. INGLIS said, that the hon. and gallant Officer (Hon. Capt. Berkeley), who preceded him, had by his political life in general, and by one memorable vote in particular, entitled himself to respect in all his other Parliamentary proceedings, for earnestness and sincerity, even where he did not carry conviction to his hearers. As to his hon. and learned Friend (Mr. Vernon), who preceded the gallant Officer, he (Sir R. H. Inglis) would not follow his speech further than to say, that one more full of the personal confessions of a public man, of the private narrative of his travels, of an *éloge* on his own high-minded principles and consistency, he had never heard. For the condescension with which he obviously regarded the weakness of those with whom he was now differing, in this section of the House, they all doubtless felt as grateful as they ought; but he would not let off his hon. and learned Friend without one parting observation. He had referred largely to his political life; but the date of his conversion to those views which now, so much to his own satisfaction, authorized him to lecture these benches, was not earlier than the 11th June last year; for, on the preceding day, namely, on the 10th

June, 1845, he found his hon. and learned Friend most stoutly denying, in opposition to the hon. and consistent Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. Villiers) that the Corn Law does restrict the supply of food, or that it is prejudicial to the welfare of the country, especially of the working classes, or that it ought to be abolished. When he saw the name of Mr. Granville Vernon in the memorable list of the majority of 254, nine months ago, he felt that that hon. Member was not the person who was entitled to taunt with weakness those who retained their own and his last year's opinions. Then as to his hon. Friend the Member for Honiton, who had addressed the House with so much earnestness and so much ability, he must deny his right also to be an authority in the matter; since he also, though from his speech it might have been thought that he was one who had always held his present opinions, and was thereby entitled to give lectures to others upon them, was one of the new converts, whose name appeared in the same memorable list in last year's division against the repeal of the Corn Laws. Now, as to his right hon. Friend the Member for the county of Perth (Mr. F. Maule), to whom that disability did not apply, he had unintentionally omitted a most important element in the statements which he had made respecting the increased rent given for farms in that county within the last few days or weeks, as if such increase proved the confidence of the parties in the measures of Her Majesty's Government, and that agriculture was to flourish even more without protection than with it. The facts proved no such thing. The leases were leases for nineteen years, granted in the period of the greatest depression, and renewed, when renewed, in reference to the current value of all things. On the general subject of the night, after a debate of eighteen days, he was not presumptuous enough to think that on the nineteenth evening he could introduce any new matter; but still there were three or four points to which, though he had been a tolerably regular listener, he did not think that sufficient attention had been paid. They were these: first, the expense of the experiment now under consideration; secondly, the injustice of that experiment as related to one of the great interests of the country, he meant that which was connected with tithe rent-charge; thirdly, the injustice of the measure to the general agriculture of the country in the measure of

compensation not being contemporaneous; and, fourthly, admitting, what he denied, the extent of the existing distress, the utter inapplicability of the proposed remedy to meet that distress. On the first point, he did not think that it had been made sufficiently prominent in the debates, that the cost of the present measure, "that enormous experiment," as his hon. Friend the Member for Honiton had called it, was probably not less than 1,500,000*l.* of yearly revenue. In the account ordered by the House to be printed on the 6th of February last, it appeared that a sum of 357,203*l.* would, on the 1st of February, 1849, be permanently lost, as duties on corn to the yearly receipts of the Exchequer; there was a further sum of 55,879*l.* as duties on other articles absolutely repealed: so much for positive loss. Then there was a positive outlay of above 500,000*l.* sterling annually, in the shape of compensatory boons to the agricultural interests—some, for saving the counties the expense of hanging a criminal—some, 20,000*l.* in one item—some, 30,000*l.* in another. But besides this loss and this outlay, there was the risk of enormous reductions on the existing duties on the articles which were to be admitted at lower rates. The aggregate thus risked was 2,326,105*l.* Now, he would take one item only, that of spirits. Foreign spirits were now admitted at a duty of 1*l.* 2*s.* 10*d.* per gallon; henceforth they were to be admitted at 15*s.* per gallon. Either the consumption of foreign spirits would remain the same, in which case the revenue would lose 413,791*l.* every year; or it would rise, according to the diminished price, and, in that case, you would gain the same duty by having distributed more than half a million of ardent foreign spirits throughout the country, increasing the temptations to crime, as well as disturbing many of the existing commercial interests of the people. The second point to which he wished briefly to direct the attention of the House, was the gross injustice of the measure as related to the owner of tithe-rent-charge. His hon. Friend who seconded the Amendment (Sir J. Y. Buller) had with great force and effect impressed this point on the House. He would not weary the House by referring, except passingly, to the measure for the commutation of tithes, which became law only some seven or eight years ago. At the time he stated that, without entering into the question of the divine right of tithes, nothing was clearer than

that tithes were the oldest legal property in England. That property the owners did not desire to exchange for any other. Without their request, and against their interest, the Legislature compelled the surrender of this property in exchange for the present rent-charge. A bargain is a bargain, whether made with a man in a black coat or with a man in a blue coat. That bargain you made with the tithe-owner. You told him that, instead of having the first interest in the soil of England, whether cultivated or uncultivated, whenever it might be brought to bear produce, he should have hereafter, in reference to that land only which at the date of the compact was under cultivation, a certain number of bushels of wheat, at a price varying according to the average of a certain number of preceding years; that wheat being a protected article, protected by the laws for the encouragement of native industry and native produce. What is the case now? You introduce a measure, without the consent of the tithe rent-charge owner, which is, according to your own showing, to diminish the value of that which you have given him, in exchange for an absolute right over all the lands of England. The owners of the other interests in those lands may possibly—though he (Sir R. Il. Inglis) thought not with any certainty—hereafter, at the distance of some years, and with an amount of intermediate misery which has not hitherto been described in these debates, be enabled to recover rents equal, perhaps, to those at present. We have learnt now to produce meat by the plough; the application of science to agriculture has enabled the farmer by his green crops to provide food for cattle to a degree unknown even fifty years ago; and by the conversion of arable to pasture lands, the actual revenue to the lord may possibly be as great a few years hence as now. But there is one class of proprietors for whom no such resource is open. They are irrevocably bound to receive an unvarying quantity of one article of produce at a lower and a lower price. Is not the object of your measure to ensure a lower price? If it be not, and if such be not the result, you have needlessly disturbed all the social and domestic interests of the country; if it be, and if it succeed, you have perpetrated a gross injustice not merely on an unprotected class, but on that very class which, on the faith of your own laws, within the last eight years, you have compelled to exchange their old security

on the broad lands of England for a bargain which you are yourselves the first to violate. On the third point, he (Sir R. Il. Inglis) would be very brief: he was, in fact, hardly able, as the House would perceive, to make himself heard. He referred to the injustice done to the landed interest, not merely by the measure itself, but by the delay of the measures which ought contemporaneously to have been brought before the House. It was possible that the measure now on the Table might become law; while the compensatory measures, however inefficient they were for actual relief, might not even be proposed. He repeated, that he did not much value them: he thought that the transfer of some large portion of the poor's rate to the Consolidated Fund would have been a far greater relief to the landed interest, while it would distribute the burden more equally, as it ought. His fourth point was, the utter inapplicability of the proposed measure to the relief of the evil which it professed to meet. There was no more connexion between them than, according to the popular version of the old saying, there was between Tenterden Steeple and Goodwin Sands. He fully admitted that his right hon. Friend at the head of the Government was perfectly sincere in his present course. He could have no conceivable motive for it except such sincerity. He was to govern England on his own principles, and not on those of any other man—on his own honest convictions to-day, not on those which he might have held with equal honesty yesterday. But, while he admitted this most fully, he could not repeat, what he had stated on a former occasion, that exactly in proportion as he acquitted his right hon. Friend as a man, he must depreciate him as a statesman—all whose opinions on commercial policy must have been wrong for the thirty-five years of his past public life, if his opinions for the last three months were right. Though he did not think that a case had been made out for opening the ports in November last, that at least was, in point of time, a remedy more near to the disease than the measure now in progress. A famine is threatened in Ireland this spring; and you meet it by a measure which is to take effect on the 1st February, 1849. His right hon. Friend (Sir R. Peel) said on this day month, that the climax of the distress would be three months onward. How is scarcity to be cured or relieved in Ireland three months hence, by importing corn

duty-free three years hence? Upon every ground he concurred with the Amendment moved, in a speech of such talent, by his hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire (Mr. Yorke), though he did not quite follow him in some of the latter allusions in that speech: he retained his old convictions in favour of his own country, and of the duty of protecting the interests of England, rather than of encouraging those of Poland or Russia. He was not of that school who looked with equal regard or equal indifference to all other countries and to his own—

“— Whose impartial view,
Thy interests, Britain, ranks with thine, Peru.”

He felt persuaded, that the great change now meditated on one interest would materially affect others, which ought to be equally dear; and believing that it would not remedy even the local and temporary evil upon which it was professed to be grounded, he cordially concurred in its rejection.

Mr. CHILDERS gave his approbation to the present measure, under the conviction that the price of corn in this country would not be at all reduced by a system of free trade. A return which was prepared at the Foreign Office last year, proved, on the authority of our Consuls, that the price of bread in England was as low as in any part of the world. It was a fact that bread in London was cheaper than in Ostend and Antwerp, and that the steamers plying between England and Belgium invariably laid in their stock of bread in London. The price of inferior bread at Dantzic was $2\frac{1}{4}d.$ per lb., at Warsaw $3\frac{1}{4}d.$, at Hamburg $2\frac{1}{4}d.$, Amsterdam $3\frac{1}{4}d.$ At Odessa bread was $2\frac{3}{4}d.$ per lb., though corn was only 28s. a quarter, and in each of those cases bread in London was lower in price per lb. Marseilles was comparatively near Odessa, and drew a great quantity of corn from that port; and yet it was a singular fact, corn in Marseilles was at times dearer than in England. Why, then, should we be afraid of the effects of free trade? The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had declared, “that there was a remarkable tendency, apart from all legislation, to a decline in the price of wheat in this country.” Now this was a proposition opposed to his view. The right hon. Baronet had quoted in support of the argument the average prices during periods of five years each, from 1800 to 1830; but there was a fallacy in this argument. The right hon. Baronet had left the question of the currency entirely out of consideration.

When the currency assumed a natural and healthy condition, the prices rose. From 1825 to 1830, for instance, the price was 56s. 7d.; but from 1830 to 1835, the average was 57s. 11d. Wool, and other articles, fluctuated in the same way, and ultimately the same results were produced. He also anticipated great benefit from free trade by opening the ports of other nations. He felt assured that our good example would be everywhere followed, and that an extension of peace and civilization would be the consequence.

Debate adjourned.

House adjourned at half-past Twelve o'clock.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Tuesday, March 24, 1846.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL—SECOND READING.

The Order of the Day having been read for continuing the debate on the Second Reading of the Corn Importation Bill,

VISCOUNT POLLINGTON said, that it was with great pain that he rose to express his opinion against the present measure of the Government. He had for years given a firm, but, as his votes upon the Maynooth Bill would show, not a blind support to Her Majesty's Government. He asked, therefore, the indulgence of the House whilst he explained the reasons which induced him to give his vote against the measure. He entered upon this question unfettered. He had never been a member of a protection society, and had never attended a protection meeting. He had always thought that those who supported protection ought to show that they could provide a sufficient supply for the exigencies of the country; and as he had felt some difficulty upon this point, he had never closely allied himself with those with whom he would vote that night. But he had said before, and he said now, that he would rather vote for a total repeal under the noble Lord opposite, than under the right hon. Baronet. Much had been said of compensation; and the agricultural interests surely had a right to expect, that when the right hon. Baronet had taken away their protection, he would also have removed their burdens. Farmers were called upon to educate their children expensively, and to apply science to farming;

but if they were called upon to do this, they might surely be allowed to cultivate the soil in the way they pleased. They might be permitted to grow hops and tobacco, and to use barley for fattening their cattle. What were the compensations offered to the agricultural interest? As to the Bill of Settlement, it was no compensation. The right hon. Baronet might just as well have passed Lord Ashley's Bill. The measure was due to humanity, but would be of no benefit to agriculture. As to the Highways Act, he could not understand how that would operate as a compensation. From the time that Joseph had been prime minister in Egypt, no measure had been better adapted to bring the soil of the country under the surveillance of the Government than the measure which on this subject they now proposed. If the right hon. Baronet had admitted colonial corn duty free, he would not have objected. By so doing, he might have rendered more close the connexion between the Colonies and the mother country, and made the Colonies an integral part of the Empire. Jealousy had once existed between the mother country and the Colonies, but that time had passed away. Once there had been a jealousy between England and Ireland, as was proved by a letter from an ancestor of his to the great Lord Strafford, and by the difference which had arisen between Mr. Burke and his constituents. But those days had passed, and the Government might have protected the colonial interests without exciting any jealousy at home. The plan now adopted of supporting foreign trades, and of opposing the colonial and domestic interests, was to him a strange one. He did not believe that any advantage would be obtained by these free-trade measures, even from the free States of the Zollverein, or from France. From Naples the right hon. Baronet himself expected nothing. He had himself found that English ships were in the habit of sailing from Beyrout in ballast, although the finest tobacco was growing in the neighbourhood of that place; and on asking the reason, he was told that it was on account of the exorbitant duties we levied on the import of the article. Then, as to China, if we had happened to have a small establishment in this country engaged in the preparation of British tea, there would have been some chance of a reduction of the duty upon the import of that commodity from China. But in the right hon. Baro-

net's opinion, it seemed essential that a duty should be in favour of some protected interest to insure its remission or reduction. Therefore, upon hops, the duty was reduced, while upon tobacco it was retained. So, as to brandy: there was a trade in British brandy which required protection; therefore the Government reduced the duty upon foreign brandy, and retained it upon other articles in which there was no home competition. But both as to brandy and as to wine, the duty could not be considered improperly levied; and if wine was the luxury of the rich man, it ought not to be forgotten that tea and tobacco were emphatically the luxuries of the poor man. In respect to corn, was it necessary to cripple our own resources while professing to be anxious to augment them? He did not take the gloomy view of existing exigencies which the Government appeared to take. But he would say, that if agriculture were fostered as it ought to be—while applying a temporary remedy to a temporary necessity—security might be taken against the recurrence of the evil; and the immediate supply might be acquired from our own Colonies. No country was better fitted for the production of maize, for instance, than Australia, as to which Colony the Government had, no longer ago than last year, refused to permit any relaxation of the Corn Law, now to be so suddenly repealed. There was another reason why he deprecated a dependence on other countries, and preferred a recourse to our own Colonies. That reason was, that we might not run the risk of a sudden interruption, by means of war. And here, he might allude to a former opinion of the noble Lord the Member for the West Riding, as to whom he could cordially declare, that since the noble Lord's cause, which he had so consistently and honourably championed—had been fated to triumph, he rejoiced that it had triumphed in the noble Lord's person. That noble Lord had once [alluding to an early effusion of Lord Morpeth's pen] impressively alluded to the position of Rome when invaded by Alaric, and the famine to which the Empire was speedily reduced, in consequence of the interruption of those foreign supplies of grain on which Rome had for a long time previously become dependent. Whatever apprehension, however, might be entertained for the future fate of England in reference to her supplies of corn, he acknowledged he entertained far greater fears on account of the moral

and social evils likely to result from the manner in which this measure had been promoted and proposed. Without desiring to say any thing personally offensive, he could not avoid expressing his opinion that it was more to the agitation than to the arguments of the League that the Government had yielded. And the right hon. Baronet at its head, might well be addressed by the agriculturists in the memorable words of the celebrated warrior of old—"Destroy us if you will, but at least destroy us in the light of day!" If the right hon. Baronet had only intimated to his adherents that the reformed sliding scale was only intended to last as long as the good harvests, and that it would be removed by the first unfavourable season, many excellent speeches would have been saved. The House would not have lost some valuable Members; and others, like the hon. Member for Bridport, would have been relieved from the necessity of some useless journeys. Many letters had been published by Members to their constituents—some resigning their seats, some offering to resign, and some refusing to resign. From one of the former class he would read a few lines—the letter of one who, in the course of no inconsiderable career, had never sought a personal honour or advantage, and whose efforts had been devoted to the cause of humanity—he alluded to Lord Ashley, who thus addressed his constituents:—

"Although no pledge was asked or given at my election, I should be acting in contravention of an honourable understanding between myself and the electors on this particular subject, if I retained my seat and voted for the Ministerial measure."

Now no Member had ever taken his seat less pledged or fettered than that noble Lord; and he put it to others, whether the example of such men as Lord Ashley and others, were not worthy of being pondered over ere it was utterly disregarded? To those who professed that their opinions had been avowed in favour of the principle of the Ministerial measure before it was announced, he had nothing to say. He assumed that their course was clear and straightforward. At all events, as to his own course on this occasion, he entertained no doubt or misgiving. He distrusted the measure. He had deep apprehension and doubts as to the means by which it had been promoted; and no political prejudices, no deference to any men, would induce him to support it.

MR. PLUMPTRE said, connected as he was with a large and important agricultural country, which the right hon. Baronet the Home Secretary had himself a year or two ago declared would be among those in which the repeal of the Corn Laws would soonest throw land out of cultivation, he wished to say a few words upon this measure, which he conceived to be equally perilous, rash, and unjust. The reasons which had been given for its sudden adoption seemed to him suspicious, insufficient, and unsatisfactory. And though the right hon. Baronet, who professed to have been so quickly converted, considered that their former speeches in favour of protection were disposed of by being simply abandoned, it was not quite so easy to get rid of the facts, the principles, and the arguments on which those appeals had been founded. Nor could he dispose so easily of the convictions he had formed as to the necessity of protection for all branches of British industry. He did not consider it as a landlords' question: though aware that it would seriously affect the smaller classes of landowners—in whose circumstances the projected change would work serious distress and embarrassment. He viewed it principally, however, as a labourers' question. He had been surprised to hear it so confidently asserted that there was no connexion between low wages and low prices. He maintained, upon the contrary, that the price of bread directly influenced the rate of wages, and that the latter regularly rose and fell with the former. His own experience and observation had satisfied him of this. He had been engaged practically in agriculture for about twenty years, and had access to the farming accounts of those who had gone before him; and he knew that during the last half century the price of bread had influenced the rate of wages as much as 100 per cent. When corn had been high, wages had been 18s. a week in his own county; and when corn had been low, wages had been 9s. a week. A year or two ago, when corn was low, wages in Kent were 10s. a week. Before the last harvest they were at 12s. When corn rose at the time of last harvest they were at 13s. 6d., and recently, corn having fallen, they were at 12s. How could it be denied, then, that wages rose and fell with the price of corn? When corn was low, the farmers employed few labourers, and those they retained they paid at lower rates. The retail tradesmen, having less custom, sent smaller orders to the whole-

sale dealer; the master manufacturers, experiencing thus in their turn the depressing influence, employed a diminished number of operatives, and paid them at a reduced rate; and so it seemed as natural and inevitable a consequence as any that could arise from the relation of cause and effect, that wages rose and fell with prices, and that poverty increased as prices were lowered. Of this opinion had been the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, when, in 1839, he thus addressed the House:—

“Look over the whole world, and you will find that low prices of food lead to low rates of wages, and that where there is a low rate of wages there is a great degradation in the character of the working classes. Look at the Hindoos, or at the Sicilians, in their respective countries: food is cheap, but the rate of wages is also extremely low, and hence there are not in Asia or Europe more miserable and degraded races.”

There was another part of the subject on which he wished to remark, and upon which he should also have to quote the right hon. Baronet. He alluded to the effect of the measure on tithes. At the commutation of tithes the clergy had given up their right to share in the advantages of the advance of agriculture, in which advantages they had a just right to participate, as their duties were proportionately augmented, along with an increased population; and at the passing of the Commutation Act wheat was at an average price of 56s., and barley of 32s. Now there was every reason to believe, under the proposed measure, corn would fall considerably; and if the clergy, instead of having the value of a certain quantity of corn at those prices of 52s. and 32s., were to have it at prices of 40s. and 20s., the result would be that they would be robbed by this measure of one-third of their incomes. In 1839, the right hon. Baronet had declared that the repeal of the Corn Laws would, after the Commutation Act, be a “gross fraud” on the clergy and on Parliament. He begged to repeat the expression of the right hon. Baronet. The measure was indeed a “gross fraud;” and it perpetrated upon the clergy a grievous wrong and robbery. For his own part, indeed, he hesitated not to affirm that the conduct of the Government on the question was as difficult to explain as it was painful to contemplate. Sir (continued the hon. Member), this to me is the most serious and painful view of the subject. We do not now know where to look for public men, in whose character and consistency we can confide. If ever

there were men who were naturally looked up to and relied on, it was the Members of the present Administration; and certainly, what has recently occurred tends to inspire me with a distrust for public men, and a positive disgust for public life. The failure of the potato crop, the ostensible cause of this movement on the part of the Ministry, is regarded as a most unsatisfactory and suspicious pretext; and the impression is general that the movement was brought about by the proceedings of a most unconstitutional body—the Anti-Corn-Law League—to the pressure of which the Government has unhappily yielded. Having conceded to the pressure of that League, and allowed that body to attain its ends, is it not to be apprehended that other leagues will be formed, encouraged to attempt the attainment of other ends by similar combinations? Perhaps you may at some future time find it expedient to alter your opinions as to the Chartist claims, and to relinquish your dislike of universal suffrage. What security can we have that you may not thus be induced to venture further on the dark and dangerous ocean of expediency, until this highly-favoured nation becomes exposed to imminent peril, and this wisely limited monarchy is plunged into the convulsions of a wild and uncontrollable democracy. May He “who is over all” grant that my fears may not be realised! May He, in His great mercy, deliver this great country from the dangers into which (in my conscience I believe) she is now exposed! I have considered the question, Sir, according to the best of my ability and judgment, and upon my conscience I believe that I shall be promoting the best interests of this country by continuing to give to the measure the decided opposition which I have already offered to it—an opposition which I have given from my most inmost conviction, and which I shall continue to give in the firm persuasion that, if the measure were carried, it would inevitably produce the degradation and the ruin of the working population of this country, and do irreparable injury to the empire at large.

Mr. HAWES did not hesitate to give his warmest support to the Ministerial project. He was sure that it would be highly advantageous to the country; there was a very general impression to the same effect out of doors, as was testified by the fact that petitions were presented to the House from London, Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, the great towns and

cities of England, praying that the question might now be settled, and that the measure proposed by Her Majesty's Ministers might be passed without any unnecessary delay. There never was a political movement which had received less of sympathy and countenance out of the House than that which Gentlemen opposite were endeavouring to get up in favour of protection principles. They protested with unbounded indignation against any alteration of the silk duties, and declared that it would be ruinous to the trade; but it was worthy of remark that but few of the silk manufacturers joined in this cry, or sanctioned the opposition. The same fact had occurred in the case of timber also; and yet these Gentlemen talked as though it was they alone who stood between the English manufacturers and absolute destruction. He would venture to say that in obstructing those measures hon. Gentlemen opposite had not sufficiently studied and appreciated either the temper or the information of the people, and that they would find out of doors nothing like the support or sympathy they expected. But he was glad to perceive that this debate had been contradistinguished favourably from the previous debate on the subject; and with one exception there had been an absence of that vituperation which characterized almost exclusively the debate on the former occasion. He hoped that on this occasion hon. Gentlemen would condescend to argue the question, and would state some intelligible reasons which might be grappled with when they raised objections to the measures which Her Majesty's Ministers had proposed. It was no business of his to defend Her Majesty's Ministers; but this he would take upon him to say, that there was nothing in which the people out of doors took less interest than in the vituperation and abuse of the Government which had hitherto formed the staple of their debate. When this case had been argued, he thought that hon. Gentlemen opposite would have shown that that protection on which they said the interests of agriculture entirely hung, had at some period or other effected the object they had in view. But he would undertake to show this, that there never had been a period from the year 1815, when the first great innovation in the old Corn Law system of England had been introduced, in which Agricultural Committees, and most eminent agricultural authorities, had not condemned the laws, and the principles of

those laws, which those Gentlemen now sought to uphold. And when he was now told that protection was essential to agriculture, that a Corn Law was necessary, and that a sliding scale could not be departed from without injury to agricultural interests, he looked back to former times, and he found that at all periods of agricultural distress there was evidence to show the utter inefficacy of any Corn Law that had hitherto been introduced. Let him refer in the first instance to one of the grounds on which the Corn Law of 1815 was defended by one of its most eminent supporters. Sir Henry Parnell said—

"But such measures would not be requisite were there no legislative interference whatever in matters of trade. If capital was left quite free from the interposition of laws giving encouragement to its investment in every species of manufacture and every branch of trade, there would be no necessity for any Parliamentary regulation. It is in order to counteract the perpetual operation of the system of bounties, monopolies, and protecting duties, in taking capital from agriculture, that any law in favour of the corn trade becomes desirable. If every kind of trade were perfectly free, agriculture would not require any protection; but as every kind of trade is supported by some sort of legislative aid, it is folly to refuse it to that trade which is the main support of all others. If all those who are now concerned in manufactures and commerce will consent to adopt the system of a perfectly free trade, those who are now advocates for restraints on the importation of corn will willingly abandon, on their part, all claim to any such protection."

And here let it be observed that the time was come when other branches of trade in the country repudiated protection; and, if they complained of anything, it was that there was too much of the principle of protection included in the Tariff. Here then was the Mover for the Committee at that period, who said he advocated the measure because manufacturers were protected inordinately; but that their protection being removed, there would be no ground on which any longer to defend the protection of corn. The law of 1815 was passed; and he asked had that law been successful? There was then perfect protection; protection carried to the extent of prohibition; and he asked the Gentlemen opposite to have the goodness to tell him if that law had been successful or useful to the agriculturists. He would turn to the Report in the year 1821 of the Agricultural Committee in answer to this question: and he begged to be permitted to say that agricultural Committees in those days were appointed by Parliaments in which the landed interest had an overwhelming ascendancy. Since

the passing of the Reform Bill, the constitution of that House had been materially altered; and no Committee to inquire into the state of agriculture could now be appointed without there being probably included in it individuals interested in the trade and commerce of the country; but at the time to which he referred, an Agricultural Committee was almost certain to be composed exclusively of landed proprietors; and yet a Committee so constituted, condemned in the strongest terms the law of 1815. He would invite hon. Gentlemen opposite to attend to that Report. What then did the Report of 1821 say, after an experience of six years? It stated that—

"This system is certainly liable to sudden alterations, of which the effect may be, at one time, to reduce prices, already low, lower than they would probably have been under a state of free trade; and at another, unnecessarily to enhance prices already high; to aggravate the evils of scarcity, and to render more severe the depression of prices from abundance. On the one hand, it deceives the grower with the false hope of monopoly, and by its occasional interruption may lead to consequences which deprive him of the benefit of that monopoly when most wanted. On the other hand, it holds out to the country the prospect of an occasional free trade, but so regulated and desultory as to baffle the calculations and unsettle the transactions both of the grower and the dealer at home; to deprive the consumer of most of the benefits of such a trade; and to involve the merchant in the more than ordinary risks of mercantile speculation."

That Report was drawn by Mr. Huskisson, and submitted to a Committee consisting of individuals representing counties, and large landed interests in those counties, and assented to by them again. The Committee of 1822 stated in their Report, that—

"Exclusion up to certain points, and perfect free trade beyond, had induced the agriculturist to regulate his outlay by the hope of monopoly profits, whilst, in fact, he obtained only the returns of free trade."

Such, then, was the testimony borne by Agricultural Committees to the protective system up to 1822. In 1822, and between that period and 1828, there was a great pressure on agriculture; and he asked was that pressure caused by an alteration in the law, or by the importation of corn? The importation of corn in those years was trifling, and could have had no effect on the markets. The average imports amounted to 244,000 quarters a year, and there was little or none introduced in 1821, 1822, 1823, and 1824. Therefore let it be remembered

that it was not owing to foreign competition that low prices ensued. Now, with respect to the law of 1828, when a new system of protection was introduced, he asked, was that successful—did that law answer the objects for which it was passed? Why, the Report of 1833 was just as decisive with respect to the law of 1828 as the Report of the Committee of 1821 was with respect to the law of 1815. The Report (1833), after reciting and confirming the fact stated in the Report of 1821, that the charges and outgoings of the farmer were paid out of capital and not out of profits, continued—

"The Committee of 1821 expressed a hope 'that the great body of the occupiers of the soil, either from the savings of more prosperous times, or from the credit which punctuality commands in this country, possess resources which will enable them to surmount the difficulties under which they now labour.' Your Committee, with deep regret, are bound rather to express a fear that the difficulties alone remain unchanged; but that the savings are either gone or greatly diminished, and the credit failing, and the resources being generally exhausted; and this opinion is formed not on the evidence of rent-payers, but of many most respectable witnesses, as well owners of land as surveyors and land agents."

Such, then, was the result of the agricultural experience of the Corn Laws up to 1833, and which was recorded upon no less an authority than the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for the Home Department. It was then stated, as it is now, that low prices were not beneficial to the labouring population. But the answer was given at the time. He would now call the attention of the House to a very remarkable declaration of the late Lord Liverpool, who, in the year 1822, made use of the following language:—

"When the noble Earl says that the low prices incident to the distress which agriculture suffers, benefit no man, I answer that, although I sincerely wish the distress did not exist, I cannot be blind to the fact that they do benefit a great majority of the people. I have been at some trouble, my Lords, to ascertain the real state of the case, and I can pledge myself to the accuracy of this statement. In this metropolis, in which your Lordships are now sitting, never were the lower orders of the people in a better condition than they are at this moment. So that when the noble Earl says that the low prices incident to the distress of the agriculturists have not been beneficial to anybody, he certainly labours under a great mistake, for that distress, however much to be lamented in itself, is accompanied by a considerable benefit to a great proportion of the people."

Upon that declaration he would stand at this moment; and he would say further that they would find the great body of the community and the agricultural labour-

ers invariably better off when prices were low and food was abundant than at any other periods. Let him now proceed to the next Committee, that of 1836, a Committee composed largely of individuals representing the landed interest. It was admitted that there was ample foundation for the opinion that, whatever was the state of the landlords and farmers' interests, on the whole the tenant was much better off than in any preceding year; and it would be difficult to assign any other cause for this than the lower prices of articles of human subsistence. Let it be remembered also that the law of 1828 was distinctly termed a delusion, and was so designated in the draft Report of the Committee of 1836, and subsequently published under the sanction of the highest authority in this House. That opinion was confirmed by some of the most eminent agriculturists of the country; and there was a distinguished Member of that House (Mr. Woolridge Whitmore) who, in the same language, denounced the law of 1828 as a delusion. He (Mr. Hawes) contended, then, that protection was not beneficial to agriculture; and he now asked the hon. Gentlemen opposite how they intended to maintain any argument from experience in its favour? The law of 1842 had failed; it had not secured steadiness of prices, it did exclude supplies when they wanted them; and further, when hon. Gentlemen opposite said they would consent to the opening of the ports, the admission was itself a condemnation of that law. It appeared that protection had not answered its purposes; and he proceeded now to ask, had they any experience of the working of what might be almost considered a free trade in corn? He thought to a certain extent that the law of 1773 was one practically establishing free trade in corn. From 1773 to 1792 the imports of corn amounted to 4,114,995*l.*, and the exports to 2,473,214*l.* leaving a balance of imports of 1,511,781*l.* During the same period the population increased from 7,100,000 to 8,100,000. There were, further, 460 Inclosure Acts passed, whilst the average price of wheat was 46*s.* The population had gone on increasing, trade was flourishing, agriculture was in a thriving condition, and no agricultural committees were appointed during the continuance of that law. But through the whole of such period, any one who would turn to the pages of Arthur Young would find that there was a great increase of cultivation, and at the same time our imports also greatly increased. The period to which he more particularly

referred was from 1784 to 1789, of which the following table would give an accurate representation:—

Year.	Highest average price of Wheat in the London Market.	Lowest average price of Wheat in the London Market.	Difference.
	<i>s.</i> <i>d.</i>	<i>s.</i> <i>d.</i>	<i>s.</i> <i>d.</i>
1784	48 2	41 10	6 4
1785	37 5	34 6	2 10
1786	36 2	34 6	2 5
1787	44 10	36 1	8 9
1788	45 1	42 9	2 4
1789	54 11	47 0	7 11

That was a period when the corn trade was practically free, and there was little or no protection. He defied any one to show him a period when protection prevailed that the variation in the price of corn was less. But what so much contributed to the improvement of agriculture was certainly the thriving state of trade and manufactures; for about that period the steam-engine began to be applied to manufacturing purposes. In 1787, also, the Commercial Treaty with France existed, and the consequence was a great increase in the trade with that country; at the same period peace had been restored with the United States, and in a short time the trade that grew up with America became of increasing importance. That period was very analogous to the present day as regarded the measures introduced by Her Majesty's Ministers for relaxing the restrictions on commerce, by the opening of new markets, and by giving new employment to labour; therefore the same principles might be said to hold then as now, and thereby encouraging a spirit of enterprise, and an extension of our trade. When manufactures and the trading interests were in the most thriving condition, in consequence of the freedom from obsolete restrictions, and the invigorating influence of sound and just principles—principles which were practically in operation in the period referred to—agriculture flourished. They had been told that this measure would lower prices. He agreed with the right hon. Baronet that he would be a bold man indeed, after what had passed, who would venture to predict the future price of corn. He expected a fall in the price of corn when the trade in corn was no longer disturbed by Corn Laws. But, concurrently with this fall of prices, he anticipated a reduced cost of production. The advance of science, the facilities of transport, the cheaper conveyance of produce to market, longer pro-

duction, all justified this expectation; and a larger share of the average taxation of the country was paid by the trading and manufacturing interests than at any former period. The agriculturists could therefore afford to contemplate the prospect of lower prices. But low prices had occurred under protective laws, not from foreign competition, but from the excess of home growth and production. Suppose we had an abundant harvest next year, which, under the blessing of God, he hoped would be the case, what would be the effect. They recollected, a few years ago, that wheat was down to 36s.; but did they remember the price of corn after a series of good harvests? He thought that it would be a wholesome proceeding to consider the price of corn when the Corn Laws were clearly inoperative. When they had a succession of good harvests, it was obvious that the Corn Laws would have no effect. From 1742 to 1748 there was not a single year in which corn was more than 30s. a quarter; and these were all years of war. In the year 1742, wheat was from 26s. to 29s.; 1743, 20s. to 23s.; 1744, 19s. to 21s.; 1745, 18s. to 20s.; 1746, 16s. to 24s.; 1747, 27s. to 30s.; barley, 8s. to 12s.; oats, 6s. 9d.; 1748, wheat, 26s. to 28s. Making all allowances for other and distinct causes, they would find that the average price of corn was far below what it was in modern times. Now, what was the state of the people at that time, as recorded by historians, as described by Arthur Young, and by Mr. Tooke in his invaluable history of prices? It appeared that there never was a period when the labouring population were in so thriving and good a condition. The hon. Member for Kent said that low prices would produce low wages. At that period, according to Arthur Young, "the average price of wheat was, for the whole of the seventeenth century, 38s. 2d. per Winchester quarter; and for the sixty-six years, 1701 to 1766, 32s. 1d., being a fall of 16 per cent.; while the average price of agricultural labour, which on the average of the seventeenth century had been 10½d. per day, was for sixty-six years, ending in 1766, 12d., or a rise of 16 per cent." So that through that long period of time there had been a steady decline in the price of food, and a considerable rise in the rate of wages. And it must be so; for the price of labour was not dependent on the price of corn; if there was a great demand for labour, there must be a rise in wages. No doubt the cost of subsistence depended upon the price of corn; but to argue that

the rate of wages in a civilized country depended upon the price of corn was both monstrous and unjust. Nothing was more mischievous than the regulation of wages by the cost of subsistence. A skilful, intelligent, honest labourer was worth more, all other things the same, than an unskilful and dishonest one. To pay both by the cost of subsistence was injurious to the community, and, as he thought, injurious to the producer. Here, then, there was a proof that for a long period there had been a rise in the wages of labour with a fall in the price of corn. This was a decisive reply to the hon. Gentleman; but he referred to Sicily and Hindostan. There were other circumstances than the price of food in these countries, which so materially affected the condition of the people, and determined wages in those two countries. It was hardly necessary for him to refer to the United States, or to some of the English Colonies, to show that provisions might be low, and wages high. The hon. Member might depend upon it that they could never come to any safe general conclusion if they did not look to all the facts in connexion with each particular country. He could not help referring to one proof more of the effects of the comparative free trade in corn which existed between 1773 and 1792. At the commencement of the present century a controversy was going on between a number of able writers with respect to the fact that the Bank of England, by the large issue of paper money, had influenced the price of corn. He had in his possession a pamphlet written at that time by Sir Francis Baring, the most eminent mercantile authority in the country. Let him recall to mind that at that period between 400 and 500 Inclosure Acts had passed, which the increased population of the country called for. The price of corn was rising: the population was suffering in consequence. This was all attributed to an excessive issue of bank paper. It was upon this point of the controversy that, incidentally, Sir F. Baring bears this testimony to the condition of farmers and agriculture under the influence of the law of 1773—practically, as he had said, establishing a free trade in corn. He says—

"An alarm not very dissimilar has been raised against the country banks, who have been accused of enabling the farmers to hoard their corn, by making them advances of money; but the inhabitants of this metropolis are not aware of the total change in the situation of the country banks, in consequence of the war. Those which are established in seaports and great manufacturing towns may still be considered as having commercial de-

posits, with which they must, in preference, accommodate their commercial friends; but the general mass of banks through the country look to the farmers for deposits and support, as the only persons who have money to employ. It is very rare that a farmer wants to borrow; but the instances are not rare where he is able to accommodate even his landlord with a loan."

Now, if anything could show that up to this time the farmers were in a state of prosperity, this authority was sufficient. He had already said that he expected, under the proposed law, much lower average prices. It should be recollected that the altered condition of the English agriculturist, in many respects, would diminish the cost of production; and with the improvements that would be introduced, they would grow more profitably wheat at much lower prices. But there was one thing connected with this point, to which he desired to call the attention of the House. In all former Agricultural Committees there had been statements as to the prices that would be remunerative to the farmer; these ranged from 125*s.* to 56*s.* per quarter. He believed that 125*s.* was the amount actually mentioned in the Report drawn up by Sir Henry Parnell. It appeared, then, that 125*s.*, 100*s.*, 80*s.*, 60*s.*, 64*s.*, had been considered from time to time the only remunerative prices to the English farmer. But as all these predictions of ruin founded upon the dreaded prevalence of lower prices had been falsified by the result, he might safely leave all present predictions to the same test, the test of experience. Whenever he found a witness before Agricultural Committees maintaining the possibility of growing corn at a lower price, he was sure to be scouted and discredited by agricultural catechists. It was so in 1836, when intelligent Scotch, and indeed English farmers gave in evidence the price at which they could grow corn, some saying they could do so at 8*s.* and 10*s.* below even present prices. The evidence was on record, and need but be referred to. He could refer to many parts of the evidence, where witnesses said 48*s.* was a remunerative price for wheat. Several witnesses undertook to show that corn might be sold at much lower prices, and that English agriculture would nevertheless flourish, as he trusted that it would, at lower prices. There was one other point he was anxious to allude to in connexion with what fell from the hon. Member who had just sat down. He believed that the operation of the Corn Laws had been most disastrous to the commerce of the country. The Corn

Laws, regarded in a commercial point of view, could only be regarded as producing a diminution of profits. If they increased wages under such a state of things, they must diminish profits. Now the effect, if traced, of such a diminution of profits would prove to be most detrimental to the labouring classes. He was sorry that some of those hon. Members were not present who sympathized with the condition of the labouring classes. He had said that the operation of the Corn Laws tended to the diminution of profits. The effect of diminished profits was to stimulate the invention of machinery, to economize human labour. Hence that vast combination of capital, and skill, and machinery. Hence arose the great manufacturing system, which, with all the wealth it had conferred on the country, had carried with it a large amount of social evils, which the endeavours of that House had been more than once exerted to counteract. He ought, however, to say that much more for the benefit of the condition of the labouring class had been done by the voluntary energy of the great manufacturers themselves, than by any enactments of the Legislature. But what was the effect of the Corn Laws upon the agricultural interest, regarded in an economical and solid point of view? Hon. Gentlemen opposite dreaded the increase of the great manufacturing interest? they dreaded the increased congregation of multitudes in large towns. Whenever they interfered with the profits of trade in a country like England, they would engender the means of injuring themselves. He should be sorry to see this country a dull succession of manufacturing towns, connected by railroad. So he should be sorry to see the village green, and green lanes, and open commons, disappear, as disappear they would, if the Corn Laws were maintained, and population increased. The demand increasing for food, and the acreable supply remaining the same—every acre must be pressed into the service of the farmer. Capital must be also called in, and the aid of machinery, and a system of mechanical and strictly economical farming must universally prevail. In fact, the manufacturing system must prevail in agriculture. But country pleasures and sports must be extinguished altogether, and a dull succession of mere farms must take the place of all rural scenes. Wealth for a time might increase in spite of the injurious action of these laws; but it would be gained at the expense of all the healthful pleasures and pursuits

of country life. On the contrary, widen the area of supply—let there be no unnatural stimulus to agriculture—let its profits be those alone of a free competition; and whilst under its influence, the skill and capital of England would ensure the full development of the powers of the soil, and the knowledge of the agriculturist; and it would not be at the expense of those social and moral influences which ought pre-eminently to distinguish country life. For the reasons which he had offered to the House, he purposed to give to Her Majesty's Ministers his most cordial and entire support with regard to this measure. He rejoiced at the course which they had taken. He thought that it must have been foreseen and expected, that, from the opinions which they had expressed last Session, and from their former measures, they would introduce a measure similar to the present. He would only add, if they allowed agitation on the supply of food to increase, they would not be able to limit its action to this subject alone, but they would soon find it extended to other subjects of importance involving the future interests and the Constitution of the country. He contemplated that this measure would be received by the great manufacturing and commercial body with pleasure. It would allay many angry passions and prejudices, and would tend materially to produce the most beneficial results amongst all classes of the community. He must apologize once more for having occupied so much of the time of the House, and should sit down with giving his most cordial support to the measure.

Sir J. TROLLOPE wished to address to the House a few observations, in reply to the hon. Member who had just sat down. The hon. Member said the population of the country were unanimous in favour of this measure. Now, he represented a very large constituency, one of the largest purely agricultural constituencies, and he found in his district that the unanimity was all the other way. He had attended large meetings in his county, where only one hand was held up in favour of the Minister's measures. There were at those meetings numbers of persons who were connected with trade and with the learned professions; and these persons were the foremost to speak in favour of agricultural protection. He might further add that in the part of Lincolnshire which he represented, very free comments were made upon the conduct of those Members for the boroughs who had

taken a different course—he particularly referred to the right hon. Member for Stamford. He was closely connected with that borough—the constituents were his near neighbours—and he knew that they had witnessed the conduct of their right hon. Representative with great dislike and surprise. He believed they had taken a still farther step—they had produced before him the opinions which he held on former occasions; and they had called upon him to take that step which alone could be taken in consistency with what was due to his character. But still his right hon. Friend rose in the House night after night, and with great ability combated his own opinions, and overturned all the arguments he had formerly used. He had heard with some astonishment, at the beginning of the Session, that they were called upon by Her Majesty's Ministers to decide upon these measures according to the experience of the last three years. As far as he had been able to consult that experience, it appeared to him eminently to confirm the opinion which he had always entertained in favour of moderate protection; for he would tell the hon. Member for Lambeth, that he was as favourable to low prices as the hon. Member could possibly be; but he wished that the low prices should spring from the abundance of the home supply, not from the foreign market. The hon. Member had taken them back to a period antecedent to the political life of most of them—the year 1815. Very few of the hon. Gentlemen whom he saw around him had a vote either in the Legislature or anywhere else at that time. But if they examined what had taken place since that period, they would find that there had been a gradual diminution of protection. He agreed with the hon. Member that the law of 1815 was a monopolist law; but the legislation of the House ever since had been to mitigate its severity; and they were now going on at a steady and moderate pace towards that goal which the hon. Member was anxious to arrive at by a single leap. It was said that in 1822 there were low prices and great distress among the agriculturists. Undoubtedly that was so; but it did not arise from Corn Law legislation: in his opinion it arose from currency legislation. But were the complaints at that time confined to the agricultural interest? If the hon. Member would search his commercial records, he would find that at the same time there were great complaints from those who were engaged in the trade and commerce of the country; and that the

Gazette of that day furnished a long list of victims to the rashness of the legislation that was then pursued. In fact, it was the same rash spirit then applied to currency which they now saw applied to corn, and which they were endeavouring to resist. The hon. Member had carried them back a considerable time; to the period intervening between 1701 and 1766; when, he said, the average price of wheat was 32s. 4d. per quarter. But he had looked into another record, embodied in a Report of a Committee of this House in 1833, of which the right hon. Baronet (Sir James Graham) was Chairman; and he found that the price of wheat for a century prior to 1793 was there estimated to average 50s. per quarter. At the same time it was stated that great doubts were entertained as to the accuracy of any records of the price of wheat in this country prior to 1797; that the Eton College records, which were generally referred to, could not be considered as a fair criterion of the price over the whole country. Then the hon. Member not only told the agriculturists that it was incumbent upon them to produce more corn; but he was good enough to tell them how to produce it, and even named the price they could afford to grow it. He was not aware that the hon. Member had much agricultural knowledge; if he had, he must know that the improvement of land was a very expensive process, and that it was a considerable time before any returns were yielded. He must say, as representing a county which certainly had not been behindhand in its struggles to provide food for the people, that he could not call to mind a single acre of land which was lying waste in that division of the county which he represented; and that there was not an unenclosed parish, except in the borough (Stamford) which his right hon. Friend represented, and that remained unenclosed only on account of some mixed rights of the freemen. From the returns he had been able to procure, he was able to state, that from 1828 to 1841 there had been an increase in the produce of the county of Lincoln to the extent of 70 per cent. in the article of wheat alone; and he was satisfied from the improvements that had since taken place—from the great amount of drainage, the breaking up of pasture land, the artificial manures, and other processes that were applied to the land—that a much greater increase had since taken place in the county, and that the increase in the last sixteen years could not

amount to less than 100 per cent. During the same period the population of the county had not increased above 20 per cent; so that there was a large available surplus for the food of the population in the manufacturing districts. Their principal markets were Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle, and London. But how was their produce conveyed? Why, by the tedious and expensive conveyance of coasting vessels. But were they allowed to hire cheaper vessels—that is, supposing they would get them from the Baltic or the Rhine? He found that the coasting trade was an absolute monopoly. No: he found that the cultivation of the soil was hampered with serious restrictions. For instance, the tithe was a serious restriction upon the cultivation of the land; because it prevented them from cultivating it in any manner they might wish. If, for instance, a man wished to revert from tillage to pasture on his land, he was met by a fixed tillage tithe; for the amount of tithe might now be taken, under the Commutation Act, at about 10s. per acre upon tillage land, and upon pasture at 2s. 6d. per acre; so that if land which was now tillage were to be laid down in pasture, it must still pay the tillage tithe. There must, therefore, if this measure passed, be a remission of the Tithe Law: in fact, it could not stand with a repeal of the Corn Law; and that was a point which the heads of the Church would no doubt seriously consider, when the measure came before them in another place. He had heard it said that the heads of the Church were about to become consenting parties to this measure; but he did not believe that on this point they would desert the working clergy; for, upon them it was, that the burden of this measure would fall. The legislation of this House had very properly been directed of late to encourage residence, and to diminish pluralities; but how did they expect the clergy to live, if they diminished the income of the clergy in such a manner as the operation of this Bill would inevitably cause? Then he had heard the malt tax mentioned as a burden upon agriculture. He had never taken part in the agitation for the repeal of the malt tax: he believed, that as a tax, it fell upon the consumer, rather than the producer. But still he knew that it told upon the farmers more heavily than upon any other class, because they were in the habit of giving beer to their labourers; and without the malt tax they could give them very good beer at 1½d. per quart; but the malt tax added another penny to the price.

It certainly affected the farmers, therefore, as large consumers of beer; and he would not say but an injurious effect was produced upon the farmer also in this way, that he was prevented from feeding his cattle with malt; and thus the farmer was restricted from doing what he liked with his own. Then he might go on to state that there were many things which a farmer might grow profitably, but which he was at present restricted from growing. For instance, the alluvial soils of Lincolnshire were well fitted for the growth of tobacco; but this the farmers were absolutely prohibited from cultivating. But did they think that excise laws could be maintained with free trade? It was impossible. Then, again, they might cultivate beet-root for the growth of sugar as they did in France; but there was a 24s. duty on that manufacture; and this was in effect a prohibition. He had been told, however, of the special exemptions from taxation which the agriculturists enjoyed; and the hon. Member for Lambeth glowed at that point. He presumed the hon. Member alluded to the legacy duty; for, with the exception of the remission of the tax on shepherds' dogs, and such trifles, he knew no exemption. But he would ask if the legacy duty was not more than met by the imposition of the stamp duties? He would give a practical case. He had recently bought a small piece of land, which lay in the middle of one of his farms; and the stamp duties and cost of conveyance amounted to five years' rent of the land. Look at the cost of the transfer of estates in all parts of the Empire. Look at Ireland. He believed the best measure for the improvement of that country would be to facilitate the abolition of long entails, and to encourage persons to purchase small pieces of land, which they might call their own. That would be real fixity of tenure; and the House would see that it would give rise to a happy and contented population. Don't let it be supposed that there was no capital in the country for such a purpose. It was well known that a great portion of the capital raised for the railways in Ireland, was furnished by the people of that country; and he was sure they would eagerly employ it in the purchase of small portions of land, if it were not for the great expenses of the stamp duties and costs of conveyance. He begged pardon for alluding to this subject, but he felt that this was in a great measure an Irish debate. It had arisen confessedly out of the scarcity of Irish potatoes. All the other arguments he had heard in support of it—his right hon.

Friends on the Treasury bench would forgive him for saying so—he thought not worth a farthing. That failure in the potato crop, though a temporary evil, was likely to be more lasting, he was sorry to say, than some hon. Gentlemen seemed to think. He had tried some experiments, of which, he regretted to say, he could not give a favourable account; and he certainly entertained some fears for the future crop of potatoes. But he did not think Providence ever visited a land with chastisement, without, at the same time, giving some compensation; and he trusted that the effect of the present calamity would be to elevate the condition of the people of Ireland, to give them a taste for an improved description of food, and to give them that true independence which arose from adequate wages. He had endeavoured to ascertain what were the effects of these free-trade measures on foreign countries; and it did not appear to him that there was any country which was likely to meet us in the spirit of reciprocity. In France, he understood that they were in all quarters rejoicing at the relaxation of our duties, and preparing to take advantage of it by a large importation of those articles of taste in which the French are so skilful, and that they had already raised the price of their brandy; but he did not hear that any preparations were making to admit into that country British iron or British linens. They were complaining, indeed, that we had not extended our relaxations in favour of their wines; and, perhaps, when the right hon. Baronet relaxed his duties on French wines, they might be more disposed to go into measures of free trade. If he turned to the countries on the shores of the Baltic, he did not see there that they were prepared to follow our example. On the contrary, he found that Denmark, Hamburg, and the States of Northern Germany, were preparing to join in that powerful association, the Zollverein. Then the right hon. Baronet had told them that Prussia was shaking. If she was, it was not from anything that England had done. She might, perhaps, be shaking in consequence of her participation in the greatest act of spoliation which history recorded; but it was not by the example of England. Then, if he cast his eyes across the Atlantic, he found there a proposition made, but with very little show of being carried, that the American tariff, which was at present 40 per cent. on the value of imported goods, should be re-

duced one half. Even supposing that measures were carried, would that be free trade? Why, the British agriculturists did not ask more than a protection of 20 per cent., and then they would be able to meet foreign countries, fair and square, on the ground of mutual reciprocity. But it was of more consequence to consider what the effect of the measure would be upon the great and noble province of Canada. He had opposed the Canada Corn Bill, because it did not apply to the Colonies alike; it gave to Canada what it withheld from Australia, what it denied to the Cape of Good Hope, and did not give even to British India. He admitted that the apprehensions entertained of the measures in this country were groundless. The quantity imported had hitherto been very small; but the Canadians had been making great preparations, by the construction of canals and railways, and the erection of mills, to send a larger supply in future. Now, the whole of that flour would inevitably be directed to another channel; and he believed the Canadian corn would find its way into the market of New York. As regarded himself, he confessed that when he heard the landed gentlemen stigmatized by hon. Gentlemen opposite as monopolists and plunderers, he would rather abandon protection altogether, than submit to be the subject of such misrepresentations. But he stood there the representative of a large agricultural constituency; and he had shown that that constituency had performed their part towards the nation with all integrity and with good effect; and though it had been said that that district had not treated the poor with the kindness and consideration expected from its inhabitants, he begged to deny the truth of the charge, and to contend that the labouring classes of Lincolnshire were as well off as were the same classes in any other district of England. It had also been stated that the wages of the county were low. He could deny that also by the best of all experience—the experience of his own practice; and he would vouch for the truth of what he stated on this point when he declared that the average of agricultural wages was from 9s. to 15s. per week. Skilled labourers, indeed, obtained more than the highest sum. If the measure now before the House became the law of the land, landholders must of necessity reduce expenses, and wages must be reduced. It was Saturday night that took away the money of the farmers. A large portion of the land also now grow-

ing corn would be thrown back to pasture. He had a pamphlet put into his hands a few days since he should wish to quote to the House; and he would do so, did he not know that no official returns of prices existed in the period to which the publication alluded. In the days of Henry VII. and Henry VIII., so different were the laws affecting corn, in comparison with those of the present day, that enactments were made compelling persons to cultivate corn. But another opinion he held was this—that the prices of corn would be high under a system of free trade; and for this reason, that the measure discouraged the growth of corn. A scarcity would therefore ensue, and if bad seasons followed abroad, more than a scarcity. The bonding system was an admirable provision against a period of dearth; but the new law quite discouraged it. It was the policy of the Romans to keep a supply of corn for the people; and if the House required an earlier example, they would find that stores of corn were found in Egypt when famine prevailed in Judea. The new law, however, would demolish the entire system of bond, which had been found so beneficial, and at the present time furnished a larger store of food than was possessed by any other country in Europe. It had been said that merchants would still supply the land with all the grain required; but that could not happen, because protection for trade would be taken from him. He begged to apologise for the length to which his observations had extended; and with the remarks he had already made he would conclude his observations.

SIR J. HANMER agreed with the right hon. Member for the county of Perth, who spoke last night, that it was desirable for some and justifiable for others who supported this measure, and were wholly dependent upon the land, to rise and state their reasons; lest it should be thought simply an emanation of that “enormous money confederacy” of which his hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire had spoken rather bitterly, in a speech the ability of which he readily admitted, but which seemed to him to refer to matters capable of affording a very different illustration of the case. That hon. Gentleman invoked justice to aid him in support of what he believed to be protection, which yet he did not regard as equal in endurance to justice; for he contemplated the possibility of this corn law being

repealed—that was rendered unnecessary by time. And therefore his hon. Friend opened all the question of whether this was not the time at which it should be repealed by Parliament, looking at the condition of agriculture, which it might be was able now, in its own interests best understood, to dispense with the existing system of what was called protection. It had dispensed with many previous systems; and when his hon. Friend said there was a tract in Cambridgeshire which, at a vast expense, with great industry and labour, had been reclaimed from a state of waste, on the faith and security of protection, within these sixty years, one was induced to ask which protection it was on which reliance was so placed? Surely it must be something sound and practical by which the marshes of Cambridgeshire were reclaimed. If it was protection that had done this, why, then, no doubt protection was an appreciable thing, and not what some considered it, a delusion and a superstition. But if though it should be a superstition, it might have been of some avail by inducing those who believed in it to undertake operations which, when they were once engaged in, their own energy carried them through; then the mind of his hon. Friend was too direct and manly not to be ready to inquire into this, and to prefer the real and effective power, whichever it might turn out to be. Now, he knew not when these operations were commenced, or when they were completed, or by whom they were carried on, but he took the time assigned to him by his hon. Friend; and it was a very moderate portion of the years since the Revolution, to which Gentlemen so often appealed. He took the last sixty years, and he marvelled which corn law it was during that period that had afforded the appreciable protection on which the conversion of all these marshes was made to depend. But he would say in passing, that if the memory of the great works of a similar nature executed in former times had any effect upon these undertakings, if it was the fame of the Bedford Level to which the noble Lord the Member for Lynn had appealed, that induced these works as a continuation, then that the Bedford Level could have possibly derived any support from corn laws, from legislative protection, he thought might fairly be questioned, and when questioned denied. Whatever part of the Bedford Level was begun or was carried on prior to 1670, was carried on under laws the avowed object of which, written in

their preamble, was to keep down the price of corn. Would hon. Gentlemen like to look at those ancient laws? Such they would find to be their object; yet under them, and in spite of them—for they were as absurd, and restrictive, and injurious as any other—the greatness of this country grew continually, and countervailed them, though grievous famines happened, marking the futility of legislative interference with trade. Whatever part of these memorable works was completed subsequently to that period, or to the first year of the Revolution, 1689, was completed under laws which, though they were intended for protection, and to raise the price, had, as all these attempts always had had, a contrary result, for grain was from 15 to 20 per cent. cheaper during the seventy years after 1689 than it had been for forty years before that time. And well it might, when all the absurdities of the mercantile system were in vogue; and when they had a Resolution, still, he believed, to be found on the Journals of that House, affixing the name of “nuisance” to a foreign trade. In the course of the last winter he desired to inform himself concerning the Bedford Level, and he procured many of the works which had been written on that subject, and read them all. He read of the noble character, the patriotic exertions, the engineering skill, the indomitable perseverance of the men who, in various capacities, were concerned in it. He read of their motives, which were answerable to their characters; but among them the idea of agricultural protection, by a corn law, as a main inducement or encouragement to drain the fens, was what he did not find; nor, to say the truth, did he expect it; and unless it was the restoration of the coinage, which was brought about at the Revolution, he did not remember any essential protection, beyond their own exertions, which they could have received. But as to these modern works, which he wanted to come to, sixty years ago they had an import duty of 6*d.* upon a market price of 48*s.* Well, that was very nearly a free trade—very little encouragement in the way of foreign duties was to be found there. But great encouragement to enclosures, to improvements of wastes, was found somehow, for the number of acres enclosed up to the time of the Bank Restriction Act, in the reign of George III., was 2,800,000 and more. Then came the Bank Restriction Act; and if that Act and the peculiar circumstances of the long re-

volutionary war—which must be taken completely to overbear the Corn Laws, and to make the changes in them that occurred up to the peace of 1815 hardly worth alluding to—were in any way concerned as main reasons or instruments of the improvements in Cambridgeshire, then at least it was not upon a corn law that they rested during that time. Perhaps they made a more stringent corn law necessary when war ceased; and that was the opinion of 1815. What protection could Cambridgeshire improvements have derived from the Corn Law of 1815? From petitions to that House, presented in former times, it seemed to have been peculiarly on that county, or on that county with as much severity as any, that the scourge of that law fell; for far was it from a protection. Did hon. Gentlemen doubt that it was a scourge? Let them not take its character from him, but as it was given without contradiction in 1827, in that House, by the Minister of the day. It was delivered by Mr. Canning. He would rather refer them to that speech than read it; but he would tell them what was the effect of the law, and his authority was Mr. Canning. He believed there was plausibility in the political arithmetic of that law; and the pivot price which it contained was fixed rather below the average price of the preceding twelve years. The effect of that law was infinitely worse than that which they were going to repeal, of which the Secretary of State had said, that “the sliding scale would neither slide nor move, and that that was its condemnation;” for in the case of 1815 the sliding scale did move, but it moved all the wrong way. That was at a time of scarcity at home; it made the ports close, as if it had been a foreign enemy blockading them on their shores. At a time of plenty, when it should have averted foreign supplies, according to its theory, it poured them in. In the one case it was the fraction of *5d.* in the averages, of *2d.* in the other, that did this; and the fluctuation of prices, and the ruin of the land, and the misery which this protective measure caused, were such as had not been known before. And what did the Agricultural Committee, which sat afterwards, recommend? Was it increased protection? an aggravation of political arithmetic? He spoke not from recent reference, but he had a strong impression that they recommended them to construct a Corn Law, so that it should interfere as little as pos-

sible with the course of trade. In 1821-22 that did not appear to be wisdom which had been held wisdom by not inconsiderable men, and by responsible Ministers, in 1815. At that time there was again a change in the Corn Law; but the scale was so constructed that it never came into operation, and that law, therefore, did not remedy any evil; it did not in itself effect any evil; it was simply another instance of protection professed by an Act of Parliament, but in any practical sense worthless altogether. Well, then, to come to what he might call our Corn Law; that was, the Corn Law under which this generation had lived, and which they, sitting in that Parliament, had repealed. He doubted very much whether, under that law, the improvers of Cambridgeshire or any other agriculturists found appreciable protection—found that was a principle upon which calculations could be based, which could make agricultural improvement arithmetically secure. One principle there was which was developed—a kind of science, not famous for its security, however—a science well known along the eastern coast; much practised, at all events, though, like other illicit sciences, it betrayed its votaries sometimes; which was called “working the averages.” How much corn came in at the *1s.* duty? How much at periods when it was not required, by dint of these operations? How much was heaped up, of two or three years’ growth at a time, unprofitably, in warehouses, either here or along the Baltic, exercising, like that mountain of loadstone that they read of in the *Arabian Nights*, a kind of magnetic influence upon prices, though it did not stir, and when it did stir, coming down like a landslide or an avalanche, confusing and overwhelming everything in its way?

“No laws can set prices in trade”—[he repaid his hon. Friend (Mr. E. T. Yorke) for Sir Simon D’Ewes with Sir Dudley North]—“no laws can set prices in trade, the rates of which must and will make themselves; but when such laws happen to lay hold, it is so much impediment, and only prejudicial.”

They had heard of wheat, brought from various places, imported at a low rate, during the existence of the Corn Law. Did they think they could argue generally from particular instances, or that the rates spoken of last night and heretofore by the Member for Sunderland would be the rates easy to come by, when these impediments were removed—when there was no longer a law which rendered it uncertain to the foreign merchant, who bought from the

producer, at what time and after what rate he should be able to sell again; which introduced an extraneous uncertainty, and added it to that which was incidental to such matters? Why, they would be laughed at from Dantzic to Odessa who came with such expectations to buy corn. The noble Lord the Member for Lynn repaid that anticipation by a smile; but he would tell that noble Lord, acute as he was said to be in matters of calculation elsewhere, given to calculations, as he certainly was, in that House, whether they were acute or not, that the merchants of the Baltic would be a match for him, and that they would tell him impediments to trade did not always tend to raise prices; and that an article of commerce might be worth a greater price, in proportion as hindrances to bringing it into the market were removed. He rejoiced, therefore, as a landed proprietor, that these impediments were to be removed. He thought, also, the condition of the world rendered it full time. He believed it was necessary that a great example should be shown of what the true policy of such a country as this really was, whether at home or abroad; and as foreign trade could not be well separated from home trade, and as it acted on our internal and domestic condition in a way which he suspected some of the Gentlemen who talked about protection to native industry had little considered, it was satisfactory to find the example set by the Government, and which would be warranted by the Parliament of England, bearing sign of fruits even now. He held in his hand a paper in which the revenues and expenditure of England and France had been contrasted by Baron Charles Dupin; and since the opinion of foreigners had been called the voice of contemporary posterity—at all events it was less disturbed by party and personal topics, and by philippics, such as one heard occasionally in that House, but looked to the main current of affairs, and took its judgment thence—let them see whether, in the policy of this country, influenced as it had been for a long series of years by the right hon. Gentleman, governed as it was by him now, there was any inconsistency apparent to Baron Dupin. So far from it, he saw but one object steadily pursued from 1815 to the present day; and when he drew his conclusion and his comparison with the contrary system in his own country, it was not in favour of France. The ease of the Government was, that great public emer-

gency called on them to proceed. He believed that this was true. On the one hand, reason, experience, the concurrent voice of statesmen, the warnings of many years, the accents of 1842, stronger and deeper than them all, and which sounded in the ears of this Parliament, called upon this Parliament, rather than on any other, to take the steps to which they were invited by the Government, before which party spirit bowed its head, to which they were equally invited by the right hon. Gentleman, or with a change of opinion every whit as great and as amply acknowledged by the noble Lord. On the other hand, what was it that they proposed who were opposed to the present measure? What was their policy? What did they design—a new fixed duty, a new sliding scale? this one they had condemned. He knew not what was their policy; but if he wanted to find a comparison for those who sought shelter and protection, as they were pleased to call it, under auspices of unstable Corn Laws, he should say that they were like that fisherman, of whom they had all read in Milton, anchoring his boat, in delusion and the darkness, to a whale.

VISCOUNT EBRINGTON said, he had no wish to imitate the spirit which animated the debate of yesterday, and felt glad that hon. Members had that night adopted a different tone. He would not follow the example of attacking the right hon. Baronet and his Colleagues. He would leave them to be attacked as they might by their friends, and defended as they best might by themselves. For the purpose, however, of making intelligible the question before the House, and the position in which it stood, he would refer to what had happened in November. [The noble Lord narrated at some length the resignation of Sir R. Peel, after he had in vain endeavoured to persuade his Colleagues to join him in a gradual repeal of the Corn Laws; Lord John Russell's attempt to form a Ministry; and Sir R. Peel's resumption of office.] He would consider the Bill before the House, first, as a separate measure; second, as a part of a comprehensive adjustment. He regretted that Government had combined the repeal of the Corn Laws with the continuation of the sliding scale for three years. To that scale he had ever been opposed. The first speech he had made in the House had been in opposition to the principle of that scale. Against the evils of that scale, his noble Friend the Member for London

(Lord J. Russell) had in July, 1842, prophetically warned the House, and predicted the evils which would infallibly result from its introduction. The noble Lord warned the House, in 1842, against the adoption of the Government measure then proposed by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government (Sir R. Peel), and had on that occasion observed, that whatever way the averages were taken, that still there would be found a defect, because they did not take into consideration the quality of the corn. For instance, in 1841, a considerable quantity of the corn crop had been damaged; and in consequence of this a great diminution had taken place in the averages which regulate the duty. But had the public derived the advantage consequent upon this apparent reduction of price? No, the consumer obtained no benefit whatever, for he had to pay as much for his bread as if no such reduction in price had taken place. The noble Lord had further exposed the fallacy of the system by stating—

“In January, 1841, the average price was 61s. 2d.; in 1842, it was 61s. 2d.; but did the people obtain their bread at the same price? Far from it. The price of the best town-made flour was 55s. per sack in 1841, while in 1842 it was 61s., thus making a difference of 6s. per sack in the flour of which bread was to be made, while the averages did not vary one jot.”

This clearly proved that the price of bread could not be accurately ascertained by reference to the averages of corn. He could not but rejoice to find that the hon. Member for Hull (Sir J. Hanmer) had now taken this view, and was prepared to admit the evils of the sliding scale. He trusted that hon. Member would use his influence with the Government, and impress upon them the necessity of repealing this last vestige of a system which increased so much the uncertainty of trade, and though frequently confounded with protection, had in reality nothing to do with it. But there were other reasons why the Government should not continue a modified sliding scale; and one of those was, that by so doing they were conceding in substance that great object sought by a powerful confederation, while they at the same time failed in putting a stop to the agitation which that confederation was formed to carry on. The Government by the present proposition was about to concede what the Anti-Corn-Law League required; but at the same time left enough of protection to justify a continuance of the agitation. For his part, he thought it

would be well at once to put a stop to a remedy, in his opinion only less dangerous than the evil it was intended to cure. But there was yet another stronger reason why the Government should at once abolish the laws respecting the importation of corn from foreign countries. The unprecedented scarcity of food, owing to the extensive failure in the potato crop, had stripped the foreign warehouses of their accumulations; so that the British farmer would continue to be protected, not, it was true, by prohibitory laws, but in consequence of the extraordinary peculiarity of the times. He was far from sharing in the opinion of the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel), that because there would be a great increase in the cultivation of foreign corn, and consequently an increased production, at the expiration of three years the prices on the Continent would be higher. He, on the contrary, thought that prices, so far from rising, would, in accordance with the usual laws which regulate supply and demand, diminish at the end of three years; and the farmer, decidedly, at the expiration of that time, would be subject to some accumulations of corn kept back till the duty entirely ceased. He felt that an apology was due to the House for detaining them at any length, especially after the very long discussions that had already taken place: but, as they had been informed by Her Majesty's Ministers that the measures they had proposed for the adoption of the House were to be considered not only as a settlement of the long-disputed corn question, but as a general scheme of commercial adjustment, he hoped he might be permitted to consider it in that light for a few moments. He would not discuss what had been usually considered the burdens on land; for the hon. Member for Lincolnshire, in two consecutive sentences, had stated with respect to tithes, that an injury would be inflicted on the landlord by the permanent tithe rent charge, and a cruel loss in the rent charge would be sustained by the tithe receiver from a reduction in his tithe under this Bill. Neither would he dwell upon highway rates, the malt tax, or other charges, which were to be alleviated by other means rather than by a fancied shifting of burdens from one class to another. But there was another burden upon land, which had not been referred to in this debate, and which, while it yielded little to the revenue, pressed grievously upon the small landed proprietors, and heavily,

though not in the same proportion, upon the large: he alluded to the laws of real property, and the expense of transferring or mortgaging land. The consequence of this system was, that small properties could with great difficulty be sold, and it lessened the value in the market of large ones. He denied that the Government measures now sought to be introduced, could be called a comprehensive adjustment, while this monster grievance affecting landed property remained untouched. Free trade in land, since it did not precede, ought at least to be coincident with free trade in corn; he asked it as a right, he did not beg it as a favour, to be allowed to sell land in the dearest, and buy it in the cheapest market. He did not mean to say that since the able Report of the Real Property Commissioners, much had not been done towards redressing the grievance, or that some relief had not been afforded; but this he would say, that though some of the Bills brought into Parliament in accordance with the recommendations of the Commissioners were to a certain extent productive of utility, that the efforts of volunteer legislators had confused still more the expensive and complicated laws relating to the transfer mortgago of real property. One very remarkable proof might be given of the positive defect in the law of real property with respect to the value of land. In England, where all our prejudices and feelings were enlisted in favour of the possession of land, land sold at fewer years' purchase than in any other country. In France, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, and in parts of Germany and Italy, land sold from thirty to thirty-five, and sometimes as high as forty-five years' purchase; but in England it averaged from twenty-seven to thirty, and in Ireland it was rather less. The consequence of this system, combined with the enormous cost of transfer, had the effect of rendering small estates almost unsaleable, the charge for transferring bearing no proportion to the value of the estate transferred. He did not so much object to the cost of stamps, but he objected to the cost incidental to showing a title and making a retrospective history into an estate, at a charge quite irrespective of the magnitude of the estate, or of the frequency of the transaction. Those charges constituted, in his opinion, an enormous burden on land. In the Report of the Real Property Commissioners, several startling statements had been made upon the subject. There was one case in which the cost of making

out the title would have been greater than the price; and the vendor having signed a contract was glad to let the purchaser have the land for nothing, in preference to making out a title and receiving the purchase-money. There was also a case where the vendor of some land in Somersetshire paid 4,000*l.* purchase money, and 1,000*l.* in law expenses. In addition to those cases, a conveyancer had told him that it was a matter of no uncommon occurrence to charge ten or twelve per cent. expenses on the sum realized by a sale. There was one remarkable fact contained in an anecdote, so pertinent to the present question, that he could not omit mentioning it. An eminent lawyer having sent a title to a conveyancer, called upon him to hear his opinion, when the conveyancer pointed out to him many defects in the title, which appeared at first conclusive, against its validity; upon which the lawyer remarked, "Then you advise me to give up the purchase." "I beg your pardon," replied the conveyancer; "I thought you were for other parties; buy it by all means; the title is as good a one as you can get." Now, he would ask, did not a system such as that eminently require reformation, and ought not some other principle to be adopted which would consult the interests of both parties, by affording facilities of transfer to the vendor and to the purchaser? As a question of political economy it needed no discussion. But in a social point of view, there were also many evils consequent upon the law of real property. The state of the law as it at present existed, precluded the possibility of a poor man ever hoping to become a landed proprietor, because the enormous expense of transfer would deter him from investing his savings in the purchase of land. Who could doubt but that a cottage and garden would be the most attractive savings bank the poor man could possibly invest his money in? or who could doubt but that the landlord's ability to sell a portion of his estate, without a heavy cost incurred in transferring it, would facilitate the acquisition of such property? The state of the law led also to the absorption of the smaller proprietors. If hon. Members would read the evidence taken before the Lords' Committee on Drainage, they would perceive how such a tax pressed upon those who expended capital in improving property. One gentleman stated that he had undertaken improvements which would cost him 7,000*l.*, and that the legal expenses connected with raising the money were 700*l.*,

or ten per cent. on the capital. Such a want of facility of raising money led to bad cultivation and increased pauperism. He believed the community owed a deep debt of gratitude to the Anti-Corn-Law League for the efforts it was making to put small estates within the reach of the industrial classes. In England the general feeling of the people had not been one of hatred or enmity towards the owners of the soil; but this was caused by the general diffusion of landed property. The state of the law, however, was diminishing the number of small properties; the poor could not become landed proprietors, because of the expense of transfer, except in the case of copyhold. The consequence of the continuance of such a state of things might be seen in Ireland, where there were but two classes of occupiers of land—barons and serfs, with no yeomanry or middle class to connect them. In the Highlands of Scotland they had the same state of things; vast tracts of land held by one proprietor; the same want of employment for the population; and the same want of a middle class of landowners. Till lately they had no political and religious differences there; but how long would it be before the Free Church might become an element of discord in that country as great as ever had been experienced in Ireland? He regretted to say that the conduct of too many of the Scotch landlords had been such as to lead the people to view them with feelings somewhat analogous to those with which landlords were regarded in Ireland. And was the case different in Wales, where there existed so much discontent? It was all very well to talk of the new Poor Law and the bastilles, as they were called, as being the cause of that discontent, and of a state of things similar to what existed in Ireland. The evil was produced by the very same cause that created it in Ireland; but, being on a smaller scale, the effects were on a smaller scale too. He contended that while this monster grievance remained in the land, no one was entitled to regard the Ministerial scheme as one worthy the name of a comprehensive adjustment. Mr. Wilson, describing the difference between the two kinds of property in his valuable pamphlet, quotes Mr. Hargreaves' authority for saying that real and personal property can be dealt with (substantially) in the same manner, sold, mortgaged, settled, disposed of by will; and goes on to say that what the register at the Bank of England declares as a fact, the abstract of the title affords

the means of ascertaining through the ordeal of a laborious investigation. The purchaser accepts the stock because it is standing in the vendor's name; the land, because it ought to be so standing. The law has provided machinery for posting up to the day the title to the stock, and telling the standing purchaser how the account actually stands; whereas, the title to land is left sixty years in arrears, and requires an accountant to post it up. If he were called upon to suggest a measure for settling this matter, it would be one in accordance with the opinions of a gentleman who stood high in the estimation of all who had considered this subject—he meant Mr. Senior. He would appoint real property commissioners to go into the whole subject, recommending that they should take steps to assimilate the condition of England with respect to the facility of dealing with landed property to the state of matters on the Continent, where it was transferred from hand to hand as easily as the three per cent. Consols in this country; so that by degrees all classes would come to have an interest in the welfare and safety of the owners of the soil.

Mr. RASHLEIGH was not accustomed to trespass upon the indulgence of the House; but there were some occasions of such importance, that although a man might wish to consult his own convenience, it behoved him to come out boldly and state his opinions. He could not, after hearing the proposition of the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) sit still, or refrain from expressing the alarm with which he viewed the precedent about to be established with respect to the commercial policy of the country. He would like to ask the right hon. Baronet, whether he was prepared to concede to the unconstitutional demands made upon him by the Anti-Corn-Law Leaguers, for there were other persons of that persuasion beside the hon. Gentlemen opposite. The measures lately proposed by the Government, and now sought to be made the law of the land, would, in his opinion, so far from causing an adjustment of the question, prove a bonus to further agitation. The right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department might smile; but he had no right to indulge in smiles upon so momentous a matter as the subject under discussion. Hon. Gentlemen opposite might smile; but they were the promoters of the agitation to which he had made allusion. But he confessed he was surprised to see the right

hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department, who ought to put down agitation wherever he found it, smiling at such a subject as the present. [*Laughter.*] Hon. Gentlemen opposite were not going to silence him by their laughter, for the cause he was about to advocate was of too much importance to be put down by the laughter of the hon. Member for Stockport, or the crowd he saw behind him. The speeches that had been made in times past by the right hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Treasury (Sir R. Peel) were quite sufficient to convict him upon the present occasion. The noble Lord the Member for North Lincolnshire (Lord Worsley) had quoted extracts from two of the right hon. Baronet's speeches delivered in 1842; but he held in his hand an extract from a speech made in June, 1844, not twenty-one months ago, and a portion of which he would read, with the permission of the House. It was in answer to a Motion made by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. Villiers) for a repeal of the Corn Laws. What the right hon. Gentleman had said upon that occasion, he (Mr. Rashleigh) would stand by, for they were worthy of the great leader of a party that had since been deserted. The right hon. Baronet, on the 26th of June, said—

"I know, according to your strict rigid principles of political economy, abstractedly, if we were to forget the condition and circumstances of the country, and the interests which have grown up under the long endurance of protection—if we were to speak mathematically of these principles, no doubt they may be true. It may be true that a population from which protection is withdrawn, ought to apply itself to other employments; but is that strictly true? If we are not mere philosophers and men of science, having to deal with abstract or indefinite quantities, but have to consult the convenience, the comfort, the subsistence, of great masses of human beings, are we to disregard those convictions which must be presented for the consideration of the Legislature and of statesmen? I speak not merely of tenants under leases, but of tenants-at-will, and of the labourers. No doubt, as far as the law is concerned, there are free opportunities for the application of capital to other branches of industry; no doubt it is true, speaking literally and technically, that the labourers in Kerry and Galway may go and seek for subsistence in Manchester and Coventry. That is all true enough in theory, but false in practice. How can you disturb a man who is far advanced in life, to the age, perhaps, of nearly half a century, whose father and grandfather before him were occupied in agriculture, and who knows nothing else himself? How is he to try this project of suddenly removing himself from his old occupations and locality to new ones? Why, you would destroy his confidence in the application of his capital to agriculture as before, and you leave him without other modes of employing it. You may

rejoice and indulge in those theories of modern philosophy and political economy; but when you have endangered and destroyed the peace and happiness of a nation, you will have but a sorry return for your pains. Looking then at the long endurance of the protection, at the amount of capital involved in agriculture, and the position of the population dependent upon agriculture, and at the interests, not merely of the landlords and tenants, but the comprehensive interests of all classes of the community, I must give my solemn and unqualified opposition to the proposal for the immediate removal of the present protection to agriculture. But I will not shrink from the other question. Am I prepared then, as I am opposed to the immediate removal of protection, to bring under the immediate consideration of the House any modified proposition for altering the amount of protection determined upon two years ago, and carried into effect with the general goodwill and concurrence of the agricultural interest? I say at once, I am not holding language different from that which my right hon. Friend and myself held at an early period of the Session. We then said, that we never had it in contemplation, and now we say that we have it not in contemplation, to make any alteration whatever in the Corn Laws."

This was not said by a mere private individual of this House, but it was the opinion of the First Minister of the Crown—an opinion stated to this House not twenty-one months ago; and he thought it the duty of the right hon. Baronet to state to the House and the country his reasons for his tergiversation. This change was the more extraordinary, considering the silent and deserved contempt with which the Motion of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton used to be treated in that House; and that was the constitutional way of treating an unconstitutional set of tyrant agitators. This perhaps might be considered pretty strong language; but it was the language suited for 1846, when the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had become the leader of the Anti-Corn-Law League. He looked with great confidence and hope to the right rev. Prelates of the other House, who, he trusted, would stand by the Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage. Gentlemen opposite might save their sarcastic smiles at the mention of the cottage. He knew those hon. Members well enough. Though he lived at some distance from their smoky regions, their long chimneys were above the horizon of his memory. Some of those personages, whom the manufacturers held in the greatest contempt, were his greatest friends. Some of the operatives whom they treated with so much contempt and severity, he should be proud to have at his table. The League had on all occasions trampled on the rights of those operatives, but they never dared to

face them in an open meeting. All the League meetings in the manufacturing districts were held in holes and corners. They were not open meetings. Though some of that party might laugh—and among them he saw the hon. Member for the Tower Hamlets—yet that hon. Member might, if he visited the manufacturing districts, satisfy himself of the distress that prevailed there among the operatives. The hon. Member for Bolton was smiling under the shade of his fingers; but this was no smiling question, and the sooner he left off making those ill-timed grimaces the better. He was glad to hear from the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) a few nights ago of the prosperous condition of the miners in his (Mr. Rashleigh's) county. They were described as being in a state approaching to luxury. It was said that they had such an abundance of food that they were enabled to apply a large portion of their earnings to the purchase of feather beds. Now, could there be a better argument for continuing that state of things under which they enjoyed such prosperity? These people had good wages, and knew nothing of the truck system. He should like to see the hon. Member for Stockport coming among them. It would take some time before he could lay himself down in one of their feather beds. But these operatives were wide awake to the proceedings of the right hon. Baronet. They were well aware of the evil tendency of his free-trade measures. They knew that his proposition respecting the article of copper ore alone would ruin a vast number of the industrious classes. He would read to the House a letter which he had received from a gentleman in that district, who employed upwards of 3,000 men daily. [The hon. Member then read the letter, the effect of which was that the free-trade measures of the Government would materially injure the industrious classes, particularly those in the mining districts; and that in bad harvests the miners would have been often without bread, if the self-adapting power of the sliding-scale had not secured them an ample supply on moderate terms.] He regretted to be obliged to oppose the measures of the right hon. Gentleman, whose experience and talent were so great; but he could not, at the expense of his own consistency, follow the right hon. Baronet's newfangled notions. He had always acted on principle, and should continue to do so. He hoped the Conservative party around him would remain true to

their principles, and that the next election would send many gentlemen to their aid whose conduct would give a tone and character to the House that would raise it in the estimation of the public.

Mr. F. T. BARING trusted that the hon. Member who had just sat down would not consider him wanting in respect if he followed the course of which the hon. Member seemed to approve on a former occasion, and treated his observations with that constitutional silence which the hon. Member considered so conclusive an argument. He should be very much disinclined to break silence at all on this subject; but as it seemed to be the arrangement that they were to debate the question until a given time, and he was, therefore, not prolonging the debate, he felt an anxiety that it should not pass by without expressing his cordial approbation of the measures introduced by Her Majesty's Government. He might perhaps wish, with his noble Friend, that some modifications might be made; but, looking at the measure as a whole, and seeing in it great good, and much more the seeds of future good, he should give it his warmest and most cordial support. As for going into the arguments upon this question, they were so utterly worn to pieces, that there was nothing left; and any Gentleman who had heard the speech made that evening by the hon. Member for Lambeth, would feel that it was quite unnecessary, until at least an answer had been given to that speech. There was, however, one circumstance which had developed itself in the course of the discussions—one great fact, if he might so call it, which required notice—he meant the formation of a large party independent of the two parties which used to divide the House. This party had withdrawn their confidence from Her Majesty's Government, and stood now in a perfectly independent position. He could not but agree with the observation made on a former night by his hon. Friend the Member for Liskeard, that a great party must, with the power, assume the responsibility of party. When a party chose a leader, and bound themselves together by party ties, they were called upon to declare to the House and the country the course which they intended to follow. He begged hon. Members opposite to believe that he spoke of that party with no feeling of disrespect; but on the contrary, he gave them great credit for the spirit, intelligence, and ability with which they had conducted themselves under the very difficult circum-

stances in which they had been placed, deprived of their former leaders, and thrown on their own resources. He was desirous to put to them some questions as to the course they were about to pursue; he wished to ask them what they proposed to do with regard to this Corn Law? It was all very well for an individual Member to rise and object to the measures of Her Majesty's Government: he was not called upon—it was almost presumptuous—to lay before the public counter proposals; but a party stood under serious obligations. If hon. Gentlemen had taken upon themselves to form a party, looking, as they naturally must do—if they were in earnest, which he was sure they were—to the ascendancy of their own opinions, and the elevation to power of those in whom they placed confidence, they must act as a party. He was desirous, therefore, to ask them, if the present measure were rejected, what measures they were prepared as a party to lay before the country? He had heard several propositions from Gentlemen of the protection party. Some hon. Gentlemen were in favour of a fixed duty; others again, among them the hon. Member for Somerset, said that the battle was to be fought for the present law—for that or none; that no compromise could be accepted. An hon. relative of his own who had spoken ably against the Bill, stated as his opinion, that the present moment was the best for a compromise. He must be permitted to recall to the memory of the House an admission made to the right hon. Baronet opposite at the beginning of the Session. The right hon. Baronet, in his opening speech, stated the dangers he foresaw, and asked the question, whether or not he might consider it as admitted, that he ought to have taken some measure in November last—some such measure as suspending the Corn Laws. The House would remember that the right hon. Baronet put that question, and that it was then generally admitted on the protection benches, that under the circumstances the right hon. Baronet ought to have suspended the Corn Laws. But, further than that, hon. Gentlemen went the length of blaming the right hon. Gentleman for not having issued an Order in Council at the time. Now, he put it to them, in the face of that admission, what course could they now take? He asked them for a plain answer—would they condescend to be intelligible? What was their scheme? Did they mean to support the sliding-scale? If they did, he asked,

after that admission, to know by what arguments? One great recommendation of the sliding-scale used to be, that its opponent—a fixed duty—could not be relied on or upheld in times of scarcity; while, on the other hand, the sliding-scale adapted itself to the emergency, and admitted corn as it was required. Such had been their argument; but how could they now contend that the sliding-scale had this power of self-adaptation, when they admitted that no longer ago than November it ought to have been suspended, because it had not so adapted itself. But that was not all. There was another argument that used to be urged in favour of the sliding-scale. His noble Friend the Member for the city of London, in bringing forward his proposition in 1841, admitted that a difficulty did exist in the way of the fixed duty: he admitted that in case of famine it might be difficult to retain the fixed duty; and he proposed to overcome it by investing the Crown with the power of issuing an Order in Council, to admit corn in times of scarcity. What was the reply of the right hon. Gentleman opposite? It was, that such a power ought never to be vested in a Government—that a law should be devised which would adapt itself to circumstances. What became of that argument after the admission that the Government, in November last, ought, on their own authority, to have issued an Order in Council to suspend the law. Who, too, they asked, supposing the Corn Laws to be suspended, would have the courage to replace them? Such was the tenor of their arguments. But how would they go to the country, and in the face of such arguments—after contending that the sliding-scale ought to have been suspended—how could they go to the country and seriously propose to support what by their own showing was so inefficient? How could they continue to advocate the present sliding-scale when their admission showed it possessed none of the qualities which originally rendered it preferable to the fixed duty? All the old arguments on which the sliding-scale had been defended, were abandoned by the admission made by the protection party—had they not made that admission? They had told the House that the agricultural party would have supported the right hon. Baronet in a temporary suspension of the Corn Laws. The hon. Member for Somersetshire stated that he had been ready to do so, and that the great body of the farmers entertained

the same views. For his own part, he thought that the right hon. Gentleman was right in proposing what he had proposed to the Government last November. If, with the authentic information before him, the right hon. Baronet dreaded scarcity in Ireland, the right hon. Gentleman's proposal was a most just and proper one, and one for which he would have gladly supported a Bill of Indemnity. But the right hon. Baronet was well aware that when he consented to the Order in Council he rendered a reconsideration of the Corn Laws necessary, and so were his Colleagues. Well, but was it a fixed duty which they were prepared to advocate? He was not disposed to attack those who favoured a fixed duty. He had been a party to the proposition of a scheme of this kind in 1841, thinking it the best which could under the circumstances have been proposed, and the one which would have given them ultimately the means of meeting further claims with more knowledge of the subject than the present arrangement had afforded. But the time for such an arrangement had passed. He could not but feel that they were now justified in changing their opinion on this subject. Could they go to the country on the question of a fixed duty? The Member for Newcastle-under-Lyne, and some other Gentlemen, had expressed a great hankering for a fixed duty. Well, they abandoned that proposal: then, what did they propose? He asked the noble Lord the leader of the party to state to the country what he proposed—what was the business scheme which he was prepared to stand by, and what was the expectation in which they continued their opposition? It was quite clear that the opinion of that House was in favour of the measure of Government. Were their expectations, then, founded upon the Bill being thrown out in another place? If such were the case, had they calculated the cost of the position which they were about to assume? Was it so comfortable a thing for the House of Commons to be opposed to the Lords on such a question? Such a circumstance had not been unknown of late, the greatest difficulties of Lord Melbourne's Administration having been occasioned by the opposition of the two Houses of Parliament. But the protection party talked of appealing to the country. Were they prepared for that fight? Was it so light a thing to have an election—in which the agriculturists would be banded against the trading classes?

And on what question would the fight take place? On that of the food of the people; one of the most exciting of all subjects which could possibly be mooted. Let them think of what would be their position in such circumstances. Parties would be bidding on both sides for the physical strength of the country; on the one side they would have the argument used by the manufacturers, that the labourer was by them—the country party—deprived of his food; while, on the other, he saw symptoms that the arguments to be used would not be of a less stirring description. The rural population would be told that the foreign would be employed instead of the home labourer—that a repeal of the Corn Laws would throw out of employment the agricultural peasant, and starve the labourer. These were not safe arguments to use in the course of a violently contested general election. Therefore if hon. Gentlemen did not feel perfectly assured of success, they were taking upon themselves a most heavy responsibility in throwing the country into such a state of confusion and excitement. And at what a moment would such a contest come? If the expectations of the right hon. Baronet were correct, this contest would take place at the very moment when Ireland would be suffering under a want of food. But, putting aside these difficulties: suppose, for the sake of argument, they were in power—suppose they had a Treasury bench able to contend with those who now fill, and those who lately filled it—suppose that they had a willing and united majority—were they quite sure that they would have no other enemies to contend with? Look to the course of every Government since 1815. From that time to this, if they would look to the history of the administration of commerce, they would find that it had been one of continued relaxation. It might have been quick at one time, and slow at another; but whether they looked to the Governments of Lord Liverpool, or Mr. Huskisson, or Earl Grey, they would invariably find that our commercial policy had been one of relaxation. What inference did he draw from that fact? There was a free trade influence in Downing-street, which seemed to be infectious. It seemed as if those who had the best means of knowing the state of trade of the country, and who had also the responsibility of providing for it, found of necessity, that there was to be but one course, that of relaxation, to be pursued. Let them

but select independent men to sit on the Treasury bench—men who had the power to think, and the manliness to act upon their determination, and he would have no fear even of a protectionist Administration. He felt satisfied that when they felt the responsibility of the position, they would be compelled, at whatever sacrifices, to follow in the footsteps of their predecessors. It was not to be supposed that it was a particular agitation which was the cause of their present position. It was reason, justice, truth, which were betraying them—they were silently undermined by the stream of time; for their castle was built upon sand.

Mr. SHAW could assure the House that he was not unmindful of the indulgence and kind attention he had recently experienced from them in a former stage of the measure then under their consideration. He would therefore make his present trespass as short as possible, consistently with the facts he was anxious to lay before the House. He was the more anxious to do so, on account of the speech of the right hon. Gentleman who had just sat down, which related to the alleged famine and consequent disease in Ireland, on which the right hon. Gentleman, following the example of the Government, had laid such stress. He had from the first approved of taking every precaution against the possibility of so great a calamity as a famine in Ireland, and for the alleviation of the undoubted sufferings of a large class of the poor in that country; but he had likewise maintained that the prospects of famine had been exaggerated, and that the Government had been unduly alarmed, and misled by the reports they had received on the subject. He was not unconscious of the unpopularity and invincible observations which the course he had taken was calculated to bring upon him; nevertheless, in a matter of that grave importance, he felt it an imperative duty to state to the House what, in all sincerity, he believed to be the real truth of the case. He wished at the same time to guard himself from misconstruction; he bore in mind the melancholy fact that a large portion of the Irish people were habituated to live on the very verge of destitution, and that any failure in their almost only food, the potato, must sadly aggravate their sad condition. He had never denied that there had been in the last season a general disease in the potato, and a considerable failure: he had, therefore,

lent his willing support to the remedial measures of the Government for giving labour to the unemployed, food to the destitute, and medicine to the sick poor of Ireland. He had not charged, as he had been accused of doing, the Government with wilful exaggeration, nor the officers of the Government, or those employed by them, with intentionally misleading the Government; but he had said, and then repeated, that the prospects of famine in Ireland had been in fact exaggerated, and that the Government had been in fact misled. He had been challenged for the proof of that statement. He was then prepared to make it. He would commence by referring to the first official document which had been presented to the House, namely, "the Report of Dr. Playfair and Mr. Lindley." In that was the following statement:—

"We can come to no other conclusion than that half of the actual potato crop of Ireland is either destroyed, or remains in a state unfit for the food of man. We, moreover, feel it our duty to apprise you, that we fear this to be a low estimate."

That was on the 15th of November last. Now, that one document illustrated his whole statement, for no one could suppose that these eminent men were guilty of a wilful exaggeration; yet, when they said that in November one-half of the potato crop in Ireland was destroyed, there was not a practical man in Ireland who did not know that that was a monstrous exaggeration; and he (Mr. Shaw) would demonstrate it to the House. Why, if half the crop was gone in November, there would scarcely be a potato in Ireland at that moment, and the papers he held in his hand would show that not only were the Irish markets plentifully supplied with potatoes up to last Saturday, but that the market price was rather falling than rising. The next document was the Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry, sitting at Dublin Castle, and dated the 20th of January. Did they attempt to say that, even at that period, two months further advanced, half the potato crop was then gone? No such thing. They did not give any estimate of the loss. It was a difficult calculation to make with anything approaching to accuracy; but he had reason to know that so far as they had made it, their opinion was that at the end of January there might have been about one-fifth deficiency in the stock of potatoes. A fifth in January could not have been more than a tenth, instead of a half, in November; and was he to be blamed for calling that exaggeration?

Then, as to the market prices, his hon. Friend (Mr. Miles) had obtained a return "of the highest price of potatoes in the various market towns of Ireland, in the week ending the 24th January, for the last seven years." The previous six years had been very low ones; but that document showed that on the 24th of January last the average price throughout Ireland was about 4d. the stone, or less than 3s. the cwt.; that was, at least, no evidence of famine: it was not more than a remunerating price. He should, however, be able to show that since then the price had not materially varied; that, in fact, it was, if anything, lower. He had from time to time, since that return had been placed in their hands, marked in the margin of it the variations in the price up to the latest period he could receive from market notes or otherwise authentic information; he had done so without making any selection, and the result was, that the price up to the present time was, as nearly as possible, the same as in January. He would read from different parts of Ireland a few samples to the House:—

POTATOES, PER STONE.

Belfast ...	Jan. 24.—	6½d.	March 3.—	5d.
Randalstown ...	5	...	11.—	6½
Cork (City) ...	5½	...	21.—	5
Downpatrick ...	5	...	10.—	4 to 4½d.
Newry ...	4½	...	8.—	4 to 4
Enniskillen ...	4	...	10.—	3½ to 4
Galway ...	4½	...	4.—	2½ to 3
Gort ...	3	...	14.—	2½
Kilkenny ...	4½	...	11.—	5
Limerick ...	4½	...	12.—	3½ to 5
Castlebar ...	3	...	4.—	2 to 3
Drogheda ...	6	...	13.—	5 to 6
Nenagh ...	3	...	10.—	4½
Waterford ...	4	...	12.—	3½ to 4½
Enniscorthy ...	5	...	8.—	3½
Wexford ...	4½	...	4.—	4 to 5

He had received that morning a weekly paper, the *General Advertiser*, printed last Saturday in Dublin, and furnishing market notes, with the last prices of potatoes, in thirteen market towns in various parts of Ireland, which he would shortly read to the House, taking them all in hundred-weights:—

"Dublin, which was the highest, was 4s. to 4s. 6d.; Belfast, 3s. 6d. to 4s. 6d.; Castlebar (Mayo), 2s. 6d.; Enniskillen (Fermanagh), 2s. 6d.; Kilkenny, 3s. 4d.; Limerick, 3s.; Mullingar (Westmeath), 3s. 6d.; Newry (Down) 3s.; Tralee (Kerry), the market note states, 'the potato market was plentifully supplied, and, as yet, no advance in prices beyond our former quotations'; Randalstown (Antrim), 3s. to 3s. 4d.; (and it was curious that Randalstown was the first town mentioned in the disease (Ireland) return, where dis-

ease was said to exist on account of insufficiency of food); Waterford, 2s. 6d.; and Wexford, 3s.

Surely those returns indicated no famine price. Next, with regard to the Paper headed "Disease" (Ireland), presented to the House on the 13th of the present month; introduced so pompously, and with such threats of extinguishing his representations, by the immense impression it was to make upon the House; he lamented that even so much sickness, and apprehension of sickness, prevailed at the present time in Ireland as that return set forth; but he did not recollect a year in which, at that season, the same might not be said with truth of the sanatory condition of that country; and a more complete failure of the promise, as compared with the performance, to establish any alarming increase of fever as the consequence of famine, he had never met with. The Paper was headed "The most serious representations made by the several medical superintendents of public institutions." The first inquiry that occurred to the mind upon reading that document was, what was the entire number of such medical officers in Ireland, and what proportion did the number of extracts given bear to the whole? He believed the medical superintendents of public institutions in Ireland were in number nearly 700; and all the extracts given in the Paper in answer, he presumed, to a circular, only amounted to 108. He (Mr. Shaw) had analysed these, and he found of the 108 that only 29 gave any positive opinion that fever or other epidemic had been caused by scarcity of food. Six, who reported that fever had appeared, declared that it was not owing to the scarcity of food; others attributed the existence or apprehension of disease to various other causes—such as wet weather, bad habitations, insufficient clothing, and, above all, want of employment. The following extracts, which he would take at random, afforded fair specimens of what these "representations" principally were:—

"Apprehends fever in districts; strongly recommends establishment of a fever hospital." "900 able-bodied men and an equal number of women, besides many small farmers, are seeking employment. Apprehends breaking out of disease. The people being unemployed, are unable to purchase food. Outbreak of fever frequent in summer months, and spreads rapidly for want of an hospital." "5,000 or 6,000 poor unemployed. Breaking out of disease apprehended in the spring and summer. Suggests the erection of a fever hospital in districts where destitution is heavily felt. Medical district of officer embraces a diameter of twelve miles from his residence."

Nothing could be more natural nor more just than that medical officers should recommend the establishment of fever hospitals, and a better provision for the sick poor in districts where, no doubt, such were wanting; and that seemed to him the whole drift of the return. He had then endeavoured to show, from the market price of potatoes throughout Ireland, which should be the best criterion, from a comparison of the Government's own Reports, and from an analysis of the Fever Return, that there was at present nothing approaching to a famine in Ireland: but he would like to complete his proofs by reading a few general communications. The first he had taken from the report of the charge of a learned Judge, delivered within the last fortnight in Omagh. He was a very humane Judge, of long experience, and also well acquainted with country affairs,—he meant Mr. Justice Torrens. In referring to one of the Acts lately passed in that House for the relief of the Irish population, Judge Torrens observed:—

"I must say, however, in relation to this subject, that, in passing through the country, I have not been struck by any appearance of starvation or misery which may be said to be abroad. I have observed the potato fields and haggards of the farmers of the country as I have passed along, and I really must say that there is not more than the usual, if so much, appearance of misery or destitution throughout the country."

That was on the North-west Circuit; including Tyrone, Fermanagh, Donegal, Londonderry, &c. The next was from an hon. Friend of his, a Member of that House; and though the letter was private, and written for another purpose, yet, as it was very creditable to the feelings of his hon. Friend, he might mention his name—the hon. Member for Longford (Mr. Lefroy). The letter was dated the 18th of that month, and stated—

"It would in the present state of things be most important that all who can should remain as long as possible, with a view of ascertaining in the different localities the extent of real want, and endeavouring to relieve it and to guard against its increase."

Mr. Lefroy added—

"Your statement of the other evening as to the potatoes, is confirmed by my experience in Longford, Sligo, and Roscommon. I have been an eyewitness in those counties; but precautions are no doubt necessary."

Those were two counties of Connaught, and one of Leinster bordering on Connaught. He would take some other counties in Leinster, and next read an extract from the letter of a gentleman who resided

in the county of Wexford, and was a grand juror of the county of Kildare, and who spoke of both counties; his letter was dated the 17th of that month, and it stated—

"It is perfectly true what you have stated in your place in Parliament, that the amount of distress in Ireland has been greatly exaggerated. Last Saturday I bought, in the public market of Naas, several barrels of potatoes for seed of the best description and perfectly untainted, at 5½d. per stone. Having come to this county to attend the assizes from the county of Wexford, where my family residence is, I am enabled to state that there also there is an absence of distress. On Saturday, the 8th inst., I myself sent to the market of Gorey two loads of potatoes, sound and no appearance of taint; and the man in charge had to store them in Gorey. So great was the glut in the market, that he was unable to obtain a higher price than 3½d. a stone; and he considered that not enough. In Enniscorthy, distant from Gorey eighteen or twenty miles, the price was the same, and the same again in the town of Wexford."

As regarded the south, he had a letter from a gentleman residing near Cork, who said on the 18th, in allusion to his (Mr. Shaw's) statement in the House—

"I myself am a farmer, to the extent of from 300 to 400 acres; and, as a landlord and farmer, can safely say Ireland has not, in my memory, experienced a better year than the past."

From the neighbourhood of Fermoy, a clergyman of the Established Church wrote to him within the last week:—

"I am a friend to the principle of free trade; but I think a great question ought to be considered on its own merits. The potato panic in this part of the country is *vox et præterea nihil*. I drove towards Kildorrery yesterday. The people were employed in opening their pits, and the universal answer to me was, 'They are very good.' My own are as good as I ever saw; and Mr. —, of Old Town, near Doneraile, gave me a similar account of the neighbourhood about him."

The last extract was from a Presbyterian clergyman in the neighbourhood of the city of Cork, and it was the only communication in answer to one from himself; the others had all been casually received. [Mr. COLLETT: What is the date of the letter?] The 21st of March, last Saturday. The writer said—

"Since you left this neighbourhood," in the end of December, "the general opening of the pits show that the disease had progressed."

He wished to keep nothing back: the letter continued—

"And what is more strange, the injury appears most where most care has been taken to avert the malady; wherever the plans recommended by the Commissioners were adopted, the destruction of the potato appears more complete. In some districts the potatoes have been much less injured—as the barony of Inniskilly, from which a great supply is at present sent to the Cork market;

farmers from which district proposed to let me have as many thousand stone as I wished guaranteed safe from disease at 5d. a stone. This is the market price of white potatoes to-day in the Cork market; the cups are 3d. All agree that the crop was more abundant by one-third than it has been for the last seven years; that the injured potatoes have been given to cattle in place of the good ones, formerly set apart for the same purpose; and that there is a greater quantity of potatoes in the country than is generally believed. Much has been done to spread the cry of famine by interested individuals, to make themselves popular, by calling on the wealthier class to subscribe funds for the purchase of provisions for the poor, and most people will inform you that distant districts are starving. From all this, it is evident that fears have been magnified not a little."

He hoped that he then had satisfied the House, that while he charged others with exaggeration, he had not himself been guilty of any in the former statement he had made to them. The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had rested so great a part of the case of his present measure on the foundation of the potato failure in Ireland, that he felt the more justified in dwelling upon it; but for his own part, if he were to admit that the failure had been to the utmost extent represented, he still should be at a loss to understand why the whole commercial policy of a great Empire should have been changed to meet a casualty which in this climate every thinking man who had supported the existing system of Corn Laws must always have contemplated as possible; and, if the system was good for anything, it must have been good to provide against contingencies to which they were constantly subject. Further, according even to the showing of the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) himself, it would have been like the old adage,—“Live horse, and you shall have oats.” The remedy would be too late for the disease. He still believed the measure would be disastrous to the best interests of England; but more unquestionably so in Ireland. When he saw that in the year ending the 5th of January last, there had been imported into Great Britain from Ireland upwards of 3,250,000 quarters of corn and flour of Irish growth, he could not comprehend those new political economists who said, if by the repeal of the Corn Laws you removed the artificial price that was then paid for their corn in England, it would be left at home for the poor Irish farmers and their own families to eat. He had certainly read something of political economy, although he did not profess to be a political economist; but at least he knew enough of the principles of

common sense to think that you might as well tell the butcher and the baker that if they lost their customers they and their families might live plentifully on the meat or bread that would be left upon their hands, as tell the poor Irish oat-grower that he would be the better for losing his at present protected commerce with England. But none of the young converts talked free trade so glibly, there were none to whom the lessons of political economy seemed to come so easy as his right hon. Friend Sir G. Clerk. His right hon. Friend appeared to think that the Vice-President of the Board of Trade was a piece of official mechanism in that respect; and he verily believed, that there was no one in the House doubted, including his right hon. Friend himself, that if the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had not changed his opinion on the subject, there would not at that moment be a stouter or burlier protectionist in the House than his right hon. Friend the Vice-President of the Board of Trade. His right hon. Friend had never said, so far as he knew, that he had altered his opinions, and his right hon. Friend very wisely had attempted no explanation; if his right hon. Friend had, he might borrow a short complot from a character in dramatic history:—

“Ban, ban, Ca-Caliban,
Get a new master—be a new man.”

The right hon. Gentleman the Member for Portsmouth (Mr. Baring) paid a great compliment to the protectionist benches in turning from the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel), nominally at the head of the Government, and addressing his hon. Friends as if they were then the only influential party at that side of the House. The right hon. Gentleman seemed very inquisitive about what was to be their policy if they came into office. Taking warning from the example of the last and the present Government, he would advise his hon. Friends not to commit themselves by any pledges or promises of consistency. An hon. Friend of his had just put into his hands an extract from an answer of the right hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Treasury (Sir R. Peel) to somewhat of a similar question put to him in August, 1841. The right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) then said—

“Upon this subject I must maintain precisely the same language which I held previously to the dissolution; at any rate, you shall not have cause to charge me with having, before the dissolution, employed language which, now that I have obtained a majority, I am inclined to modify, and

that whilst I have assisted in removing you from office on account of distinct measures which you have proposed, I contemplate confirming myself in power by proposing measures of the same nature. I tell you frankly I contemplate no such thing."

That was what the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) said in 1841. But what had he done since? So he would recommend his friends to observe a prudent silence on such subjects. But, he was persuaded that office had never entered into the calculations of his hon. Friends. He, for his own part, could speak disinterestedly, for he not only did not contemplate office, but there was no office or situation that could be offered to him which he could accept. His hon. Friends had been formed into an independent party by the desertion of their former leaders, and a simple determination to oppose what they disregarded as a dereliction of principle, and a course injurious to the best interests of the country. The right hon. Gentleman (Mr. F. Baring) as representing the Whig party, seemed only to be able to regard political motives in connection with office. For a constitutional Whig the right hon. Gentleman was wonderfully apprehensive of an appeal to the constituencies. His hon. Friends neither desired the one, nor feared the other. But this much he would say, that he was persuaded they would not shrink from any responsibility that circumstances, not of their own seeking, should cast upon them. It was very obvious that no man, no matter what his abilities might be, could attempt to govern this country, who could only command about a hundred and twelve or a hundred and twenty followers in that House; and depend upon it, if the protectionist or independent party had, after a general election, a majority in that House, based upon sound and constitutional principles, they would not long be without competent men to lead them in both Houses of Parliament. He had all along felt that, had as the measure was, a thousand-fold worse were the means which had been adopted to carry it. And up to that moment only three members of the Cabinet of November had made anything that could be called an explanation of their public conduct. One of the three to whom he alluded—the right hon. Baronet the First Lord of the Treasury—had placed his renunciation of the matured opinions of thirty years partly upon the experience of the last three years, but principally upon the Irish potato failure

—a ground which he could not help thinking had itself since failed the right hon. Baronet. The conversion of the right hon. Baronet was sudden—indeed so sudden as to spread consternation throughout the country; but there was something so miraculously rapid in that of the young Gentlemen who used to come out, morning after morning, in the public papers with confessions of their "change of opinion on the Corn Laws," that if the subject had not been too serious, it would have covered the whole with ridicule. Such, however, as they were, that was a section who professed to have abandoned their former convictions, and to act upon their new opinions. There was another class who did not profess to have altered their former opinions, but only to act in opposition to them. The second member of the Cabinet who had explained, might be considered as the representative of that class; and they had in him no doubt the example of a great man—the greatest of living men—a man who for more than half a century had served his Sovereigns and his country as probably no one man had ever served them before. He seemed to think that some peculiar command of his Sovereign forced him to an act which, all must know, could only be a sacrifice to him. If his explanation was not perfectly intelligible, still the answer was, it was the Duke of Wellington, and, as regarded him personally, if England was not satisfied she must be silent. But, though the laurels of Waterloo could not thus be withered, depend upon it they would not shelter the public reputation of the other nine, who seemed to have that only refuge. Their conduct was still unexplained, it was probably inexplicable. The remaining member of the Cabinet had given his explanation, as well by his acts as by his words; he had declared his principles, and he had stood by them. A man of ancient lineage, and of mind as noble as his birth, he had by his manly and straightforward conduct done much to redeem the honour of his order. If the measure were to become law, he earnestly hoped that his anticipations of its ill effects might not be realized. But at least throughout the present generation, the mode of carrying it would remain an indelible disgrace to English statesmanship. It would impair the national character of England throughout the civilized world. It had not only destroyed all public confidence in public men, but the ramifications of its blighting injury were untraceable. Making consti-

tuents distrustful of their representatives—dissolving old friendships into bitterness and execration—setting father against son, and son against father—it had disturbed all the relations of social and domestic life. The whole House, the entire country, would participate in the evil. All those who sat at his (Mr. Shaw's) side of the House must deeply share the sorrow; but let it be the consolation of the friends who surrounded him, and himself, that they had escaped the degradation.

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER presumed that the cheers with which the remarks of his right hon. Friend had been received by those who sat around him were to be ascribed rather to the peroration of his speech, in which he had advertised, with his accustomed severity, on the conduct of those with whom he was formerly connected, but whom he now opposed; for he could not believe that any of those hon. Gentlemen who had attended to the course of events in this country since the commencement of the year, or who had paid the most ordinary attention to what had been passing in that House, or to the reports which had been laid on the Table as to what was passing in Ireland, could have intended, by their cheers, to sanction or approve the statements which the right hon. Gentleman had made with respect to the existence of scarcity in the sister country. The right hon. Gentleman had commenced his speech by stating that he was now prepared to confirm, by detailed statements, what he had hinted at on former occasions when he had addressed the House—that there was not that ground for apprehension of scarcity in Ireland which Government had endeavoured to impress on the country; that those statements had been made with the particular view of supporting the Government measure, and had no reference to the real state of the country. The right hon. Gentleman had further referred to the documents on the Table of the House, for the proof of that fact. He should have heard these statements with considerable surprise from any one; but coming from an Irish Member, who ought to know the state of the country with which he was connected, they had astonished him. He had heard them with yet more surprise, knowing that the hon. Member for Somersetshire had stated distinctly, in an early period of the debate, that he was deeply impressed with the prevalence of distress in Ireland, and was prepared to assent even

to a suspension of the Corn Law, with a view to afford relief. On what ground were these statements said to be exaggerated? The right hon. Gentleman said that the accounts on the Table of the House represented nothing more than what was the ordinary state of scarcity in Ireland. If that be so—if the people of Ireland are suffering under a degree of starvation such as was represented, and which every day's accounts confirmed—if they are suffering under sickness as described in these Papers—if they are threatened, moreover, with increased scarcity and increased sickness—and if this be the ordinary state of the population of the country, what shall we think of those who, when the Government comes before the House, and asks for the means of increasing the quantity of food in Ireland, and of preventing, if possible, the recurrence of such calamities, think it consistent with their duty to oppose the measures of the Government, to resist the more extensive introduction of food, and to prevent the diffusion of comfort among a people whose ordinary state was alleged to be what these Papers describe? Let him read to the House what were the statements with respect to the population of Ireland at this moment—whether it was the ordinary state or not, he would not stop to inquire. He would begin with the most favoured part of Ireland—Ulster. From Market-hill the report was—

“Fever, diarrhoea, and dyspepsia have increased considerably, and are in many cases traceable to the use of unsound potatoes. It is very probable that fever will break out and spread, especially among the lower orders.”

From Belturbet, in Cavan, the report was—

“Dyspepsia, dysentery, and diarrhoea, caused by unsound food; cottiers are without even tainted potatoes for food; many unemployed poor are in a starving condition; breaking out of disease, arising from scarcity of food.”

From the Tullagh Dispensary, Clare, the reports were—

“Fever patients have increased nearly two-thirds, compared with the last year; many of the poor unemployed; potatoes daily getting worse.”

This statement mentioned the want of employment. What was want of employment in Ireland when food was scarce? The people of Ireland were not generally employed on wages: during great part of the year they lived on the produce of their land; the potato was to them their chief subsistence during the period of the year in which they had no employment. Therefore, when it was stated that the

people were unemployed, and that the potatoes on which they had relied were diseased, it was as much as saying that there was a total failure in the means of subsistence for themselves and their families. He might read similar accounts from other counties; but he trusted that the Members of the House had read those accounts, and would not be turned from giving weight to them by the statements of the right hon. Gentleman. So much for the sickness that was prevalent; but the right hon. Gentleman said that potatoes were not so scarce, that there was no deficiency to alarm any one, and quoted the price of potatoes in several market towns in Ireland during the month of January last, to impress upon the House that the price was not excessive. But, he would ask, why had not the right hon. Gentleman informed them of the comparative price in this, as compared with previous years? The criterion of the pressure on the population was the comparative price of the food they consumed; and if it was double now what it was last year, it was obvious that the lower classes in that country must suffer deeply from that pressure. He could show to the satisfaction of the House that the price of potatoes in Ireland had risen to a degree that must cause the greatest possible suffering. There had been a Return moved for of the price of potatoes in the several market towns in Ireland. From that it appeared, that in the county of Antrim the price in 1845 was 3*d.*, and the present price 6½*d.*, being an increase of more than 100 per cent. But there was another circumstance to be borne in mind. It was well known to every one in the House, that at a period when the whole crop in the country was supposed to be diseased or unsound, there was a great desire at an early period to dispose of the article, which would not be felt at another time; and if at such early period, and especially before the month of May, those who had potatoes had any doubts of their soundness, they rushed to the market and disposed of them before the decay should render them unsaleable and useless; therefore the comparison of 6½*d.* in 1846, and 3*d.* in the antecedent year, did not sufficiently represent the truth of the case; it represented an aggravation of price, but not that extreme distress which impended over the people. He (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) had said, on a former occasion, that the ordinary price of potatoes was 2*d.* a stone—the right hon. Gentleman said 4*d.*

But the Papers on the Table of the House showed that, at many market towns in the county of Antrim, to which the right hon. Gentleman had referred, the highest prices in antecedent years had been 2*d.* a stone, 2½*d.*, and 2¾*d.*, whereas they had now risen to 5*d.* and 6*d.* At Bushmills, the price, in 1845, was 2*d.*, in 1846, 5*d.*; at Carrickfergus, in 1845, 3*d.*, in 1846, 6*d.*; at Cushindall, in 1845, 2*d.*, in 1846, 4½*d.*; showing, therefore, an enormous increase. The right hon. Gentleman had said, upon the credit of some selected letters from Ireland, that there was not any real scarcity of food there. He admitted that there were places—in the county of Wexford, for example—in which the potatoes were not affected in the same proportion as in other parts of the country; but there were large districts, in different parts of Ireland, in which pits of potatoes recently opened were found either so putrid as to be unfit for the food of animals, or in which the quantity not decayed was exceedingly small. His right hon. Friend had ridiculed the reports of the persons who had been sent over to Ireland to ascertain the state of the potato crop, and had supposed that, where the potatoes were damaged, it was in consequence of the remedies suggested by those gentlemen being applied to them. Whether this was the case or not, he could not determine from personal knowledge; but the uniform tenor of the advice he had received was, that the people did not adopt the recommendations of those gentlemen. He should be happy if he could persuade himself that the extent to which the disease of the potatoes was likely to reach had been exaggerated; but he received representations every day from gentlemen connected with the Commissariat, confirming in all respects the sad state of the potato crop, of pits being opened, in which the potatoes were absolutely rotten. The right hon. Gentleman had referred to the evidence of Mr. Justice Torrens, as opposed to the representations given by other persons. He (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) knew Mr. Justice Torrens, and he had as high a respect for his opinion as his right hon. Friend could have; but when Mr. Justice Torrens wrote a letter to his right hon. Friend—[Mr. SHAW: It was not a letter. I quoted a charge to the grand jury.] When that respected Judge stated in a charge to the grand jury that he observed no difference in the crop of potatoes, as he had had no means of accurate investigation, he could not at-

taeh so much weight to that gentleman's testimony on that particular occasion, when opposed to the statements of those who saw pits opened, and saw the condition of the potatoes in them. He had risen merely with a view of not permitting the House to separate this evening under the false impression which might be made upon it by his right hon. Friend. He wished to point out the real circumstances of the disease, and the distress in the country for which they had to provide; taking the Papers on the Table as representing comparative prices of the article, it would be seen that, in some cases, the prices were more than double what they had been in former years, and in all cases greatly aggravated. And he thought the House would be satisfied that this was no ordinary case of distress; that it was an occasion which called upon the House to make those exertions to relieve that distress in which it had so readily concurred. His right hon. Friend seemed to say that this was not a moment at which provision ought to be made to increase the food of the people, and said that he could not reconcile to himself the means which the Government had taken to effect that object. His right hon. Friend, as he said, did not consider consequences, but went straight to his object. But his right hon. Friend was not responsible for the conduct of public affairs, nor charged with the duty of relieving the wants of a people suffering under the pressure of great distress; and therefore his right hon. Friend ought to make some allowance for those who, standing in a different situation, did look to consequences, and, placed in the responsible position of watching over a people labouring under great difficulties, did recommend to Parliament the adoption of measures which they thought necessary, and made that recommendation without regard to that consistency of political opinion which his right hon. Friend deemed to be so high a virtue that it ought to stand between them and the fulfilment of a duty they owed to the people. But he could not think his right hon. Friend could reconcile to himself not to adopt some permanent measure of relief. The people of Ireland had been in the habit of subsisting upon an article of food which was in a state of decay. The effects of that decay were not limited to the present time only, but must be felt for years to come. His hon. Friend the Member for Lincolnshire, in the able speech which he had made against the measure of

Government, had admitted that the results of the experiments he had made showed that the effect of the decay would last for many years. Under all these circumstances, his right hon. Friend would have done well to consider what course it was expedient for him to pursue. It was not enough for him to say no to the measures of the Government; but it became him to point out what course he would take to avert such evils, and guard against the recurrence of them. Having before had an opportunity of addressing the House on this subject, he would not now enter again upon an explanation of the motives which had actuated him in the course he had adopted, although his right hon. Friend had repeated his animadversions. He had only to state that, seeing distress and danger in the country—thinking they were not temporary only—believing that the only mode in which they were to be met was, the free admission of every article of food, and that that was the only course by which they were to be prevented for the future—he had no hesitation in giving his concurrence to the proposed measure, however at variance it might be with his former opinions. He thought that being able to lay claim to consistency of political conduct was a small weight in the balance, as against the necessity of providing for the subsistence of a famishing people.

The EARL OF MARCH would not have risen at all, did he not think it a paramount duty under existing circumstances to come forward and state his views on the measures which had been brought under their consideration. He thought a remark which had fallen from the right hon. Gentleman who had just sat down somewhat unjust as regarded his hon. Friends around him; if they had resolutely opposed, and declared they would oppose, an extraordinary measure brought in under extraordinary circumstances, his remark might be just; but the fact was otherwise. He came now to the remark which had been made in the course of the evening by the hon. Baronet the Member for Hull. He confessed that he was astonished at the course which the hon. Baronet took. He began by taking them over a long and somewhat rambling course to the Bedford Level, and works in conjunction with them. The hon. Baronet said that Corn Laws had existed in 1600; and he brought them down very regularly through every Corn Law to 1828, and condemned as most un-

just and unwise each and all the laws on this subject. He confessed, when he heard the hon. Baronet come down to 1828, he thought that when the hon. Gentleman had disposed of that law, and all others, he would naturally allude to the Corn Law of 1842; but, by a strange coincidence, the hon. Baronet stopped short. He said not a syllable about the law of 1842, and left them, therefore, to conclude that that law was a perfectly just and sound one. He confessed that nothing he had heard from the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, or from his new allies on the other side of the House, had induced him to alter the opinion he had formed as to the merits of this measure. He could see no one, either on the Treasury bench or on the other side of the House, who had put forward any solid or tenable grounds for the extraordinary conduct of Her Majesty's Ministers. For it was not a modification of the law of 1842 that was proposed, but a departure from the principle of protection—in fact, the utter abandonment of that principle. They had had a Corn Law for 300 years; but now they had been rashly called upon to adopt and act upon what the present Secretary for the Colonies had well termed a vain theory—the theory of perfect free trade. That he might not mistake the words of that right hon. Gentleman, he would quote them. The right hon. Gentleman said, in speaking of the alteration of the Corn Laws then proposed—

“That it would be a benefit to the entire community, as containing that principle which the House was pledged to maintain, a reasonable protection to the agricultural interests of the country, and to that large and decidedly preponderating proportion of the people which was essentially connected with and dependent upon the agricultural interest.”

These were the words then used by the right hon. Gentleman. It had been stated by the Secretary at War, and by other hon. Members, that if there was free trade in corn, a great influx of it might be at times expected from foreign countries; that it would be a very dangerous thing to throw the land in the country out of cultivation, and make us dependent upon foreign countries; and he had never yet heard these arguments answered. He would now endeavour to show that other countries could grow corn cheaper than we could, and a great deal more corn than they did at present; and also that there would be great danger in depending on them for a constant supply. He would, for the last time, quote

from *Hansard* an authority of the greatest possible weight with the right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government—namely his own—his own speech in 1842 on the Corn Laws. This was what the right hon. Baronet said on that occasion:—

“I shall now take the returns of Mr. Meek, to which so much reference has been made. Now, with regard to Denmark, if you admit the principle, that with the averages we have nothing to do, but that the real question is, what is the port from which corn will come at the lowest price; and what is the rate of freight at that port, and the expense of importation from it, which are the real questions for consideration, what does Mr. Meek say as to Denmark? Mr. Meek says, that during the last twenty-five years the average price of wheat in Denmark has been 28s. 10d. per quarter; of barley, 14s.; and of oats, 10s. 6d. And he also says that, in case of a regular and steady demand arising in England, the quantity of corn produced in Denmark and Holstein might without much difficulty be considerably increased; and in passing a law for the regulation of our own corn trade, is it not wise to consider what are the possibilities of the case? And in determining upon a plan which may seriously affect the agriculture of this country, is it not wise and proper for me to consider not only what may be the prices of corn in foreign countries at the present time, but what effect might probably be produced upon those prices by increased railway communication, by a regular demand, or by diminished freight? Am not I bound to take all these considerations into account when I am trying to arrange a plan which may be permanent and satisfactory, and without possibly the opportunity of retracing my steps? Mr. Meek further says that the rate of freight at Copenhagen and Elsinore varies from 3s. to 3s. 6d. per quarter; and that the average prices paid in those provinces did not exceed the following:—Wheat, from 23s. 6d. to 29s.; barley, from 10s. 9d. to 15s.; and oats, from 10s. 6d. to 12s.; and he says that, if the trade in corn was steadily and regularly open at a moderate duty, he has no doubt that wheat and barley could be grown to a much greater extent. I think then I have shown, that if the average price of wheat is 28s. 10d. per quarter, and the price of freight from Denmark does not exceed 4s., that, at least from Denmark, an opportunity would be afforded by any scale for the introduction of corn into our market, when the price here was lower than 61s. or 62s. But perhaps you may say that the quantity which could come from Denmark is wholly inconsiderable; but Mr. Meek says that from 300 to 350 quarters of wheat, from 250 to 300 quarters of barley, and from 200 to 250 quarters of oats, is the smallest quantity of corn annually shipped for Great Britain; that is to say, at the prices which I have mentioned, from one country alone, 700,000 quarters of corn are exported from Denmark, and brought here, and that in years of common fertility.”

He could quote a great deal more from the same speech, but would not at that late hour fatigue the House. If this state-

ment was right as respected Denmark and Sleswick Holstein in 1842—if it were not right to depend on foreign countries then—if it were unwise at that period to adopt a measure which had thrown the land in this country out of cultivation, why should it not be equally unwise to adopt it at the present time? This question had been often argued as if it were merely a landlords' question. He maintained that such was not the case. The first class that would suffer by the measure was the tenant farmers and the labourers. The small landowner who resided in the country, acting as a magistrate, performing a responsible duty as a country gentleman, settling disputes among his neighbours, and preventing litigation, who was looked up to and respected by the poor—if the income of these valuable persons were diminished, they would be obliged to leave the country with their families in order to escape the poor rate and the pressure of the local burdens. It would fall with peculiar severity on the tenants and labourers: that most respectable class the yeomen, who lived on property varying in value at from 50*l.* to 200*l.* or 300*l.* a year, would be obliged to sell their possessions—those men who enlightened by their example, and rewarded the exertions of the meritorious labourer, would be banished, and thus a great link in the social system would be broken. But the shopkeepers in the rural towns would likewise suffer, and the mechanic and the merchant; for, their customers being ruined, they must share in the general calamity. He must, therefore, deprecate the rushing into a despo- rate legislation without any experience of any sort to guide them as to the result. The right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government had cautiously avoided telling what his opinion was as to the prices of agricultural produce in the event of the proposed measure becoming the law of the land, although that question had been most pertinently asked by his noble Friend the Member for Lynn. The right hon. Gentleman had only stated that he had been so unsuccessful in his former predictions regarding the price of wheat, that he would on the present occasion maintain a solemn silence. He protested against a measure which would place in jeopardy the landowner, the occupier, the labourer, and the shopkeeper in the rural districts; he thought the measure would likewise operate to the disadvantage of the manufacturer and the merchant, who were con-

netted with any branch of our colonial and native industry; and entertaining those opinions, he had resolved, as his constituents had done him the honour to send him to Parliament, to vote against the measure, and to do all in his power to prevent panic and an agitation from triumphing over safe, sound and deliberative legislation.

Debate adjourned.

House adjourned at half-past Twelve o'clock.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Thursday, March 26, 1846.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL—SECOND READING.

On the Order of the Day for renewing the Adjourned Debate on the Corn Importation Bill having been read,

Mr. FINCH said, the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Portsmouth (Mr. Baring) had the other night displayed an extraordinary degree of curiosity, and had proposed a long series of questions as to the principles, and policy, and probable measures of the protectionist party in the event of their becoming possessed of power. Now, it was hardly fair to put such questions to a party so long as they remained in opposition. But if the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government would give a correct account of the course he intended to pursue during the current Session, very likely the protectionist party would be prepared to describe their intentions. As to the principles of the party, they were the good old English principles of protection, under which this country had so long flourished, and attained to a height of prosperity beyond that of any other country. As to the measures they might propose, he could venture to declare that if they should become invested with power, they would propose such measures as would be best fitted in their judgment to afford an adequate and equitable protection to the agricultural, the manufacturing, the trading, and the colonial interests of the Empire. He hoped, after this explanation, that the thirst for information displayed by the right hon. Gentleman would be somewhat allayed. With respect to the reference which had been made to the difference between the sliding scale and the

fixed duty, he thought that difference comparatively insignificant in this point of view—that the sliding scale, when the price of corn reached a certain height, fell to a nominal duty; and a fixed duty, when corn rose to that extent, must equally yield to the pressure of price. The right hon. Baronet had deprecated a “collision” between the two Houses upon the measure; but what right had the Minister to predict any such collision as the consequence of the rejection of the measure by the Upper House? He had always understood that, in a constitutional point of view, the privileges of the Lords were as inviolate as those of the Commons—that the Upper House had its prerogatives in legislation, as well as the Lower—and that, if the Lords in their wisdom thought proper to reject a measure, the Commons had no right to impeach that exercise of the legislative power of the Lords. And if the Upper House should think the measure was calculated to do great mischief; that the country had been somewhat taken by surprise respecting it; that the public were acting under a temporary excitement about it; and that an interval of reflection should be allowed; and that on a matter of such magnitude the people should be appealed to—nothing could be more constitutional than such a course—nothing ought to be more popular—nothing, certainly, could be more right or just. It would be perfectly in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution to reject the measure; for it introduced more sweeping changes in the Constitution of the country than had ever yet been projected by any Administration. It would produce, in fact, a fivefold revolution. It would effect a social revolution; for, however a Settlement Bill of some sort might accompany the measure, it could not be denied that the principle of a Poor Law was utterly at variance with the principles of free trade. This was apparent in the works of writers of the Malthus school, and of political economists generally. Then the measure would equally tend to a commercial revolution, especially in respect to our Colonies, protection of which had hitherto been the chain that connected their interest and feeling with the mother country, but which were now to be regarded as encumbrances, and of course prompted to consider with what other nation they might be better off. Nor was the measure less a financial revolution, as it would shift the burdens of the State in a most unjust manner. And further, the measure would

produce a twofold political revolution. For upwards of a thousand years—from the days of the Saxons—the landed interest had been paramount in the political system; and it was now proposed to transfer the pre-eminence to the manufacturing and monied interests, and mainly to that youngest born among them, the interest of cotton. The measure would tend to augment that democratic power which was daily giving more and more of a republican aspect and character to our monarchical Constitution. If the Upper House, then, perceiving these pernicious tendencies of the measure—perceiving that it must tend to produce discontent and dissension between different interests in the Empire—to separate Ireland from England, and Britain from her colonies—if the Upper House, apprehensive of these evil effects of the measure, were to reject it, they would act in perfect accordance with their constitutional powers and privileges, and would leave to the nation itself the responsibility of a measure so serious. The right hon. Baronet had spoken also of a “collision” between the agricultural and manufacturing interests in the event of the rejection of the measure. This, however, was only another of those feverish dreams in which the right hon. Baronet indulged. Why should the manufacturing interests feel at all incensed at the agriculturists for asserting the prerogatives of Englishmen, and for exercising the inalienable right of self-defence? If the manufacturing or mercantile interest were to be injured or assailed, would they be tame and inactive? Which of the various classes in or out of the House would be averse to a dissolution? As to the Liberal Members of the House, they must be eager to present themselves for a renewal of the trust reposed in them by their constituents. As to those who were in favour of annual or triennial elections, they must be wearied of so long a Parliament. As to the Anti-Corn-Law Members, they surely would be happy to realize all their predictions as to the number of seats they were prepared to carry. While, as to the Protectionist Members, they certainly were so far steeped in ignorance and delusion that they would be willing to venture on the contest, and to appeal to the country. He thought that the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had a far greater responsibility upon his shoulders than ever rested upon the shoulders of any Minister; but if he consulted his own interest, he would desire to devolve some portion of

that responsibility upon the people. At what number should he rate the landowners of England and Wales? Some would say some hundred aristocrats, and some thousand country gentlemen. He rated them at two hundred thousand. He believed that the tenant-farmers of Great Britain had been estimated at one hundred thousand; but with their families he thought he might state their numbers to be upwards of a million of souls. One-third at least of the population of this country depended upon agriculture; and if they went to the sister country, it would be found that three-fourths of that population likewise depended upon agriculture. He thought that if the result of the right hon. Baronet's measure was only to diminish the capital invested in land 20s. per cent., it would be the destruction of the landed interest. He did say, therefore, under all the circumstances, and considering the immense value of the interest which was in jeopardy by this measure, that the right hon. Baronet would have consulted his own interest, and relieved himself of great responsibility, if he had put that responsibility upon the nation at large. He was ready to admit that the right hon. Gentleman had at various times concocted measures fraught with great public good. He might refer to the reformation of our Criminal Code; but when he entered the Bullion Committee, he entered with one opinion, and left with another. With respect to the Corn Laws and free trade, it was well known that for many years the right hon. Gentleman had defended protection, and supported the Corn Laws; but the right hon. Gentleman was now of a different opinion than that he entertained five years ago. If the right hon. Baronet was invariably right then, he must be invariably wrong now. There was no doubt that he was a person of very extraordinary talents and transcendent eloquence; but still he was a mortal like every other man, and therefore subject to human vicissitudes. He thought that orators, no more than authors, were the best judges of their own performances. Milton, it was known, preferred "Paradise Regained" to "Paradise Lost." He believed that upon a calm review of the right hon. Gentleman's former speeches, which were public property, upon the subject of the Corn Laws, they would be found to contain much greater wisdom and foresight than those now delivered with free-trade enthusiasm within the walls of that House. The noble Lord the Member for London

had agreed to the introduction of this measure, although he before admitted that it would create distress among those connected with the landed interest. What would the manufacturers of the country think when, in assisting in the passing of measures, they incurred the risk of involving the manufacturing interest? This remark would apply equally to the agriculturists. He did think that the Gentlemen constituting the protectionist party were not to be accused of unjustifiable apprehension if they entertained fears as to the result of the Bill before the House. He found by the returns that had been made to the House, that for three years, from 1842 to 1845, the total quantity of corn imported was 3,400,000 quarters; but supposing the quantity imported during that period to have been 9,000,000, he should have no hesitation in saying, that the greatest distress would have been brought upon the country. He thought that as the present measure was calculated to lower prices in a great degree, so it would operate to the great discouragement of the British agriculturist. It would throw great quantities of land out of employment, and would render it impossible almost for the Government to raise the taxes: it would also peril the existence of the Government, and even the Constitution itself. It was detrimental and injurious both to the agriculturists and the manufacturers of the country. He thought it was sufficiently evident from what had occurred, that the agricultural party ought not to be charged with bigotry and ignorance. He begged hon. Gentlemen to recollect, that for twenty years the Administration was composed of parties, all advocating the principle of protection. Now, he did not believe it would be said that the country had been under the direction of bigots for twenty years. If the Anti-Corn-Law League were to direct their shafts against successive Administrations, the late Earl Grey and Mr. Canning being Members of them, the League would be regarded much as the Lilliputians were, when they discharged their arrows against Gulliver. That body was so absurd as almost to turn the deepest tragedy into the broadest farce. Upon looking abroad, it would be found that the principle of protection was maintained by the Ministers of Russia, the Ministers of Prussia, the Ministers of most of the minor States of Germany, the Ministers and Parliament of Holland, the Ministers and Parliament of Belgium, the

Ministers and Parliament of France, and most of the distinguished statesmen and Congress of America. Nor could it be affirmed that the principle of protection had impeded the progress of national improvement. The Anti Corn-Law Leaguers had proved themselves shallow reasoners. Let the agricultural Members drink deep of the Pierian spring, remembering that—

“Shallow drinks intoxicate the brain—
But drinking deep will sober us again.”

He supposed his arguments had been so convincing that they had driven the enemy entirely out of the field, and dismounted all their brass guns. [The benches of the hon. Member's opponents were empty.] He was glad to see that one hon. Gentleman, who had for some time maintained his post, finding the fire too hot for him, had at length put himself under the flag of protection. After this, he should not be at all surprised at gaining the day in the end. He thought that every country ought to have a system of political economy of its own. The system adopted in Persia might not be adapted to China, and that adapted for Holland might not be suitable for France. It was in consequence of a misunderstanding upon this head, that there had been such egregious mistakes among the free traders upon the subject of taxation. A hope was expressed in a free-trade article in the *Westminster Review*, that the entire abolition of the Excise would be the next step of Sir R. Peel's financial reforms. Thus it was easy to see that the next agitation would be for the abolition of the Excise. He would venture to predict that if, in some future Session of Parliament, this Corn Law should unfortunately pass, the next subject of agitation would be for financial reform, for the abolition of the Excise, and no inconsiderable part of the Customs. He did not despair, however, of seeing the right hon. Baronet taking shelter at some future period in the ranks of the protectionists, and calling upon them to aid him in his Budget. He should proceed with his observations, notwithstanding the way in which the House of Commons treated this great question. He knew there was a desire to extinguish the debate. Hon. Members talked as if this question were finished—as if the subject were exhausted, and no longer worthy the attention of the House. This he thought was most discreditable to the House and to the country, and he was resolved he would let the country see the way in which the House treated this great

question. The interests of agriculture were at stake—the interests of a body the most loyal and constitutional—who had ever been the warmest friends of the Altar and the Throne; and yet there was not a single Member of the Opposition party in the House. They would not pay the agricultural interest the compliment of attending to the debate they wished extinguished. But he could tell them the measure would not pass a day the sooner for that. The agriculturists had laid down their course—they would pursue it steadily and perseveringly, and it would make no difference to them whatever. If they considered that it would be for the advantage of agriculture and of the country that this measure should be still further delayed, there were many Members on this side of the House who, even if there were nobody present but themselves, would speak for hours together, rather than that such a miserable manoeuvre should succeed; therefore he should continue. Another point on which the free traders displayed almost infantine simplicity was, that this measure would lead to universal peace. Now, any one acquainted with history, however he might admire the amiability of these people, must pity their ignorance. He asked if there ever was a period in the history of the world which held out a hope that war might be extinguished by free trade? In all the wars of the last two hundred years, from those of Louis XIV. down to Bonaparte, it was impossible to put the finger on one of them which they could suppose might have been prevented or extinguished by measures of free trade. It might be true that the little cloud in the West might now be in course of being dispelled, for America knew that she would eventually obtain the lion's share of Oregon; and on this subject he must say, that the tone of our Minister for Foreign Affairs in the other House lately was what a poet called “a quaver of consternation.” So mean-spirited a speech he had never before listened to. England might now be said to be on her knees before America. But, however, as England and France might now be said to be united, and our finances were in as flourishing a condition as they possibly could be, considering that the Minister was dispersing them with so lavish a hand, the probability was, that America would remain at peace with us for the present; but, so soon as insurrection arose, or our finances were troubled, or we went to war with France, then America would revive her

pretensions, and commercial and free-trade considerations would have as little weight with her as they ever had in any other country. And, seeing the evil effects of free trade, what was there on the other side? A system of protection, under which he believed the nation would rise to a degree of prosperity such as he had never before witnessed. He said the system of protection had never been fairly carried out; it ought to begin, as the basis of all protection, by protecting the poor. He would have a rate of wages established for the agricultural poor. When corn was from 47s. to 50s. a quarter, the labourer should have 10s. a week; from 50s. to 55s., 11s. a week; from 55s. to 60s., 12s. a week; in fact, he would have a sliding scale for the labourers, varying from 10s. to 12s. a week, and let the condition of protection to profits be protection to the labourer. In going into the manufacturing districts, it would not be possible, perhaps, to interfere with the rate of wages, but they might interfere with the hours of labour. The hon. Member for Oldham and others were altogether inconsistent in advocating free trade along with an interference with the hours of labour; but such an interference would be quite in unison with the system of protection. He would protect manufactures both at home and in the Colonies; and, as the price of that protection, he would have the poor provided for. Children of a tender age should not be allowed to work at all; children of a more mature age should not be overworked; while grown men should not be required to work beyond a certain time; in fact, he would take care that under the name of freedom they should not have a real and *bonâ fide* slavery. Then he would have another kind of protection—a protection against sudden and unforeseen calamities; such as the introduction of new machinery, or war. In all cases of new machinery he thought the State ought to interfere. The public enjoyed the benefit of the change; therefore let the public pay the cost. Then with regard to war: there ought to be taxation imposed to go to the relief of the poor who suffered by it. That, then, would be the base of his system of protection. The next thing would be to carry on under this system a course of national improvement. The resources of this country were altogether incalculable. Mr. McCulloch estimated that the produce of the soil might be doubled; he thought that was an over estimate; but he did think that one-third

might be added to the produce of the soil. If that were so, the result would be, that the soil of this country would maintain forty millions of inhabitants. Then, with regard to the Colonies, he might mention that Upper Canada possessed some of the finest corn-growing soil in the world. Three millions of quarters might be expected gradually to come from that Colony, which would support four millions more in this country. Then, from the various soils and climates from different Colonies, we could have sugar, tobacco, coffee, almost every thing we wanted except tea. Colonial produce would have a monopoly in England, and English produce would have a monopoly in the Colonies; and this country would become the strongest, the most populous, and the most united Empire in the world; and being always prepared for war, she would be always able to command peace. Now, reverse the picture, and what were they doing? They were sowing the minds of that portion of the community which had hitherto been most disposed to uphold the Altar and the Throne; they were spreading the spirit of insurrection in Ireland; they were alienating the affections of the Colonies. Let them not suppose that these were the gloomy forebodings of a discontented country gentleman. There were three parties in the country; all of them shrewd, wise, and intelligent, and all of them bent on supporting this measure; not because it was a good measure, but because, being a bad measure, it would the more readily further their own ends. There was the Liberal party, who were anxious to have a more democratic spirit infused into the institutions of this country; and they supported the measure because in the discontent and dissatisfaction they foresaw it would occasion, they looked forward to great organic changes in their favour. Then, there was the party opposed to the Church Establishment in this country. They supported the measure for the same reason; and because they knew, as it had been lately proved by a nobleman, democracy and an Established Church could not co-exist. Then, there was the party of the Repealers, who supported this question, because they believed it was calculated to lead to discontent and disaffection both in England and Ireland; and in that discontented state of the country they hoped to be able to carry Repeal. For these reasons he objected to the Bill. The more he reflected on it, the more he thought it was the most pernicious measure that ever was

presented to the British Parliament. He could not conceive how a Minister, with the smallest reputation for sagacity and foresight, could propose this measure. He trusted that the protectionists would persevere in their opposition. They did not despair; on the contrary, their hearts beat high with hope. He trusted that the protectionists out of the House would use tenfold exertions for the defeat of this measure. It was their duty to rally round the flag of protection, and to place it in the breach. If the agriculturists triumphed, it would be a national triumph; and if they failed, they would fail as honest men ought, in the path of duty and of honour.

LORD RENDLESHAM said, opposed as he was to this measure, he was still more opposed to the way in which the right hon. Baronet had forced on the measure without making an appeal to the country. Such a radical change as this could only be sanctioned by a dissolution of the House; and, after the admission of the noble Lord the Member for London, the other night, that if he had accepted office, though he should have obtained the support of the right hon. Baronet, he still could not have carried this measure, constituted as the House was—after that admission, he thought the country had a right to say that, notwithstanding the majority of 97, this measure would be passed contrary to the opinion of the constituencies; that the question was decided, not upon its merits or its demerits, but because some 100 men thought that nobody could govern this country except the right hon. Baronet, and because some other 101 men changed their minds along with the noble Lord the Member for London, who saw no other chance of regaining power except by professing to advocate a total repeal of the Corn Laws. It would of course be folly to say that a man ought never to change his opinions; but when a public man did change, he thought the country had a right to have a clearly detailed account of the manner in which the change had been brought about. He decidedly thought that the country had a right to expect that the question put by the noble Lord the Member for Lynn should be answered, namely, what the right hon. Baronet expected would be the average price of corn under his new Bill. And, besides this, he thought the country had a right not only to hear the reasons which had induced hon. Gentlemen to change their opinions, but also to hear all those able and forcible arguments which they used only a short

time ago now refuted by them. The noble Lord read a letter, written by Mr. Huskisson to his constituents in 1814, in which he advocated the Corn Laws as a means of always maintaining a supply of food in the country; and, like Mr. Huskisson, he declared that he did not care how cheap corn was, provided the cheapness arose from an abundance of the home supply. He could assure the House that if he had an opinion that the measure now before the House would only affect the landlord, he should feel better satisfied, but by its operation the poor would suffer. Of that he was quite certain. Much had been said, both within and without the walls of that House, upon the amount of wages paid to the agricultural labourer. Fluctuations happened in all counties as a matter of course; but he knew the price paid to working men in the county from which he came (Suffolk) and he could quote them. In that county the price of labour was regulated by the price of corn. When, in 1840, he inherited the estates he now held in Suffolk, the price of flour being 3s. per stone, the wages of the labourers were 12s. per week; and when the price of flour fell to 2s. 6d. per stone, the wages fell to 11s. When corn declined further, the rate of remuneration to the labourer fell to 8s. per week. It would also be seen that the lower the price of corn, the smaller would be the surplus of wages left for the labourer after purchasing the necessaries of life. The higher the price of corn, the more labourers would be employed on a farm. Now, it was quite evident, that if the present measure passed, much of the light lands of this kingdom must inevitably go out of cultivation. Certainly this would be the case in Suffolk. On this very point he had taken the opinion of a practical farmer in his district, who had told him that when he took the farms he held, forty years ago, the price of corn was higher, and he had been able to bring a larger average of light land into cultivation. Since good prices had declined, the land had not of itself paid for tillage. The cultivation of this land had, however, answered his purpose, inasmuch as it had enabled him to employ a large number of labourers, men, women, and children, who would otherwise have been paupers. The firm opinion of that farmer, however, was this—that if the present measure became the law of the country, this breadth of light land must be thrown out of culture entirely, and that he should not be able to employ one-half the

labourers he had done. The hon. Member for Stockport had made the observation that the opinion of the tenant farmers, if taken, would be found in favour of the propositions of Her Majesty's Government; but he could refer the hon. Gentleman to a meeting of tenant farmers, where the whole body had said, that in order to secure the proper representation of their own opinions in the House, they would, at the next election, place one of themselves in the position of a candidate for their suffrages.

MR. FELLOWES wished to prove to the people of this country there still existed a large proportion of that once unanimous and united Conservative body, governed by political principle, and ready to watch with care and assiduity over the interests of those whose prosperity, and, indeed, he might say existence, was mainly dependent upon that law which gave protection to native industry. When he last received the votes of the constituency he had the honour to represent, he was returned on the understanding that he was faithful to the system of protection. He held the opinion then, that on protection to native industry depended the prosperity of this nation. His opinions were still unchanged, nor should he ever change them. Had his opinions altered, he should have thought it his duty to have resigned his charge into the hands of those who entrusted him with their votes. To have retained his position with a change of opinion would have been highly dishonourable, and he should have deserved much reprehension. He had observed that the hon. Member for Hull had, a few days since, made allusion to a speech delivered by another hon. Member, upon the auspices under which that gigantic work the Bedford Level had been constructed. He should have replied to the observations of the hon. Member for Hull, had he had the good fortune to catch the eye of the Speaker; and he was rather surprised that no other Member had risen to do that which he intended to do. Though the fact had been denied, yet the great work to which the hon. Member had alluded had been constructed during the period of protection. Further than deny the inference drawn, that the Bedford Level had been constructed at a period when protection had not existed in the country, he would not refer to ancient dates, but confine himself to a period of thirty years; and he could assure the right hon. Baronet,

within that period, land, which had only grown reeds and rushes, now grew corn; land, which a few years since, had grown three quarters of wheat only, now, under protection, grew six or seven quarters. If this protective law were removed, the land in the district to which he had referred, from the expense of draining, must inevitably be thrown out of cultivation. In 1842, the right hon. Baronet had brought in his measures for the reduction of duties, and he had said the prices of corn would range between 48s. and 54s. per quarter; generally, prices would be steady. He would ask the right hon. Baronet if the expectations on this steadiness of price had been realized. He believed corn had risen above 54s. In the course of last year corn had gone down to 45s. The cry of famine had been raised by the Members of the League, and prices had reached 58s. All this had happened under this law of protection. But the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had said, that as a famine existed in Ireland, the measures proposed were highly necessary. Was not, however, the failure of the potato crop a temporary difficulty, and that being the case, should not that be met by a temporary remedy? Why, under the circumstance of a temporary difficulty, should a measure, likely to create almost a revolution, be permanently introduced? The right hon. Baronet had said that a famine would rage in Ireland before the month of May were past. He did not despair that the month of July would go over the country before the long apprehended famine would be found desolating the sister kingdom. Of what use would it be to send corn to Ireland, when the people had no money to purchase provisions? He protested most sincerely against bringing forward a measure of this character for the purpose of relieving a temporary circumstance. The measure, however unnecessary, was stated as likely to pass, and that being the case, he wished to know, if corn under its operation would range high or low. The Government had means of obtaining information not possessed by private Members of that House, and, therefore, the Gentlemen who occupied the Treasury benches could surely tell the country whether the price of corn would be down to 40s. or up to 60s. The Vice President of the Board of Trade had stated the prices of grain in this country would not decline to a low figure, and that foreign corn would rise, and also that the operation of the change would not in-

jure the owners of tithe. If corn was not to be lower, of what use would be the change, and what reason existed for the measure? He, however, was fully of opinion that the operation of the law would create considerable alteration; and the effect would be, that the price of corn would be brought down to 40s.; and also that wide fluctuations in price would be the consequence. Who could benefit by fluctuations? Would it not be preferable if prices were to range between 40s. and 60s. that an average should be struck of 50s., and the price kept up to that point? In opposition to the opinion that corn would rise or maintain present prices, he might quote the effect to be produced on silk. The new law was to reduce prices in the article. Why should the effect prove contrary when the operation of the new law was applied to grain? Besides, it could be shown that, previous to 1842, the price of 60s. per quarter was thought a remunerating figure for corn. In 1842, the right hon. Baronet reduced the law of protection on various articles, and the price of corn went down. If, then, the price of corn fell by the change of protective laws on other articles, would it not fall when the laws affecting grain were altered? He thought no doubt could exist on the point. The members of the Anti-Corn-Law League said, that under the circumstances of a change, it would be the duty of agriculturists to render the land more productive. The advice might be good, could it be followed; but the tillers of the soil could not increase production by the use of machinery, and the over application of manure would create straw merely, and not ears of wheat. He did not despair but that, in the course of years, the agriculturists themselves would be able to reduce the price of corn, but they required time; and until that time were given them, though the large farmer and capitalist might stand up manfully against the measure, the small farmer would be ruined, and the labourer starved. The hon. Member for Portsmouth had asked, if the agriculturists threw out the intended measure, were they prepared with another? In answer to that, he would say, that the agricultural body were content to remain where they stood. The hon. Member also asked, if the agriculturists were prepared to take the responsibility of defeating the measure? He was quite ready to take the responsibility of the rejection of the measure if this happened; and if any confusion were created in the country,

let the Government take the responsibility on themselves, for on them would it naturally fall. He was quite ready to give the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government credit for the motives which had influenced him; but did he think that by throwing the country into a state of alarm, any good would be produced? Would good result by setting one constituency against another constituency, or the manufacturing against the agricultural interest? He feared it would be seen that when men uttered sentiments one day which they repudiated the next, it would be found that the agricultural body would be betrayed into the hands of their opponents. The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government might say he looked to posterity for his reward; and the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department might answer all inquiries after his former opinions, by replying he had changed his mind. This might satisfy those right hon. Gentlemen, but it would not satisfy the country. If an appeal to the country took place, the answer to that appeal would be this—that the Government must be conducted on principle, and that the people themselves would rather, if such changes were made as now proposed, prefer to receive them at the hands of the noble Lord the Member for London, than from those men who had deceived them. Before many months passed he believed the people of this nation would have an opportunity of exercising the elective franchise, when it would be proved that the constituencies preferred a Radical Government, kept in check by a strong Conservative body, rather than continue to support the right hon. Baronet and his friends. For himself, he did not expect good measures to emanate from the present Government. He should greatly distrust any measure proposed by the Treasury bench; and it would be seen that the people were willing to dispense with their services.

Mr. FULLER had received a short letter, which he would read to the House, from a person living at Anglesey:—

"With regard to corn, the matter is very serious, and the dismay very general, without any one being able to see any cause whatever for such a sweeping change. Trusting to a Protection Minister, a vast number of our best farmers have sunk all their capital in draining, but now there is a complete check to it. For twenty men you saw draining this time last year, you will not now see two. It must be recollected, that in our country all draining and other improvements are done by

the tenant; so you may imagine what a stop has been put to the progress of improvement. As to famine, there never was such humbug! No living man ever saw so much corn in Anglesey at this season as there is now; and two vessels laden with potatoes arrived at Carnarvon this week from Ireland. Pray tell Sir James Graham this."

He could only say for himself, that if the proposed measure passed, this country would be reduced to the condition of Ireland, where no protection existed either for life or property.

MR. P. BORTHWICK: Knowing the congregated intelligence arrayed on the other side of the House, he was glad to perceive the hon. Member for Lambeth in his place, who, he thought, was almost the only Member who had stood firmly to his guns. ["No, no!"] He had no suspicion that the hon. Member for Lambeth had run from his guns. He had held the opinion, that the hon. Gentleman was one to whom might be applied the words of the poet—

"Among the faithless, faithful only he."

But he (Mr. Borthwick) was glad to find the Member for Lambeth in his place, because when the hon. Member had, on a previous night, given some statistical details to the House, he (Mr. Borthwick) had intended to reply to them, though not able to do so because he had not caught the eye of the Speaker. He would now, however, endeavour to answer the statement of the hon. Member for Lambeth. The hon. Member, referring to several years of the last century, had endeavoured to show a remarkable equality of prices in those years, and he had said that the effect of a free trade in corn would be to remove a fluctuation in prices. ["No, no!"] He certainly had so understood the hon. Member. Here were the words spoken by the hon. Member for Lambeth, which he had taken from the usual sources of intelligence:—

"But the period to which he more particularly referred was from 1787 to 1792. The price of corn during these years was 42s. 8d., 37s., 36s., 41s., 45s., and 51s.; the lowest prices being 41s., 34s., 36s., 42s., and 47s.; and the greatest difference between the highest and lowest prices was 7s., and of the lowest 2s. 5d. Now, he defied anybody to show, in any five years, under a restrictive trade, that the variation was so small as that."

The object of the hon. Member was, to show that less fluctuation of price took place under free trade than under protection. He did not know from what source the hon. Gentleman had obtained his information; but he had appeared resolved that these last years should be considered

those of free trade. But in those years free trade neither theoretically nor practically existed. But, from the year 1787 to the year 1792, the following were the amounts of the bounties paid upon corn exported, and the Customs duties received upon corn imported:—

Years.	Bounties paid upon corn exported.			Duties paid upon corn imported.		
	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
1787	55,882	17	5	5,061	12	2
1788	44,206	1	11	5,344	3	4
1789	76,551	16	1	4,814	3	7
1790	10,173	15	2	10,856	17	3
1791	7,657	0	0	27,511	0	0
1792	76,802	0	0	39,543	0	0

During these years, then, the quantities of wheat exported and imported varied from 47,000 to 357,000 quarters. Now, the hon. Gentleman, with that philosophy which was so abundant on the other side of the House, had deliberately told them that there had been practical free trade from 1787 to 1792, and yet neither was there theoretical nor practical free trade during that period; for he (Mr. Borthwick) had shown that there was both an import and an export duty, besides a bounty on exports. He said this, he could assure the hon. Gentleman, with every feeling of respect for him, because he knew that there were few Members of that House to whom the country was more indebted for information on subjects of this sort; but he certainly had thought he had meant to quote the five years which followed those to which he had referred; and if he had done so, he would have been much more able to have shown the effects of practical free trade in this country; for in 1797, and the five following years inclusive, they had an absolute free trade in corn; and further than this, they had a bounty paid on corn imported; a thing, he believed, unexampled till then in the commercial history of this country. He would now quote from M'Pherson's "Annals of Commerce." That writer observes:—

"It was found necessary to hold out greater encouragement for the importation of corn and other articles of provision, than merely exempting them from duty, as by the Act passed in the beginning of this Session. Therefore, the following bounties were granted on wheat, wheat flour, Indian corn, Indian meal, and rye, imported either in British vessels or in vessels belonging to any friendly State, viz.:—

For every quarter of wheat weighing 440 lbs. avoirdupois.....	£1	0	0
For every quarter of wheat weighing 424 lbs. avoirdupois.....	0	16	0

For every cwt. of wheat flour 0 0 0
That is, when imported from any part of Europe south of Cape Finisterre, the Mediterranean, Africa, the British Colonies in America, the United States, till 400,000 quarters should be imported from Europe or Africa, and 500,000 quarters from America.

For every quarter of wheat weighing 440 lbs. £0 15 0

For every quarter of wheat weighing 424 lbs. 0 12 0

For every cwt. of flour 0 4 0
from any part of Europe north of Cape Finisterre, not being His Majesty's dominions, till the quantity should be 500,000 quarters; and—

For every quarter of wheat weighing 440 lbs. £0 10 0

For every quarter of wheat weighing 424 lbs. 0 8 0

For every cwt. of flour 0 3 0
imported after the above quantities should be completed. Then—

For every quarter of Indian corn £0 5 0

For every cwt. of Indian meal 0 1 6

until the quantity amounted to 500,000 quarters.

For every quarter of Indian corn £0 3 0

For every cwt. of Indian meal 0 1 0

when the above quantities were completed.

For every quarter of rye, 10d., until the quantity amounted to 100,000 quarters; after which, 6d."

He merely read this to show that the state of the law at the time he was about to supply him with was singularly favourable to his theory; and when the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) told them that when once the people of this country had tasted the sweets of a free trade in corn, they would not easily be induced by any power to return to restriction, he begged to observe that, in the five years to which he had referred, and to which he had presumed the hon. Member for Lambeth had intended to refer, this country had an abundant taste of free trade, and that with the addition of a bounty on corn imported into it. In the year 1797 the average price of wheat in England and Wales was 71s. 1d. (7s. being the amount of the variation of price during the five years of restriction, be it remembered); in 1798 the price was only 50s. 3d.; in 1799 it was 67s. 6d.; whilst in 1800 it was 113s. 7d.; and in 1801, 118s. 3d. During this time, indeed, there was practically no Corn Law. They might tell him that these were years of scarcity. ["Hear, hear!"] Hon. Gentlemen cried "Hear, hear;" but was not their system of free trade intended to save this country from years of scarcity? They might tell him that these years formed a period of war and disturbance; but what said the hon. Member for Clitheroe the other night? "Never," said the hon. Gentleman, "talk to me of war.

During the last war, you had corn from France, and cotton from America, when in open hostility with those countries; and, pass but this measure of free trade, and go to war with France and America, or not, as you please—trust no more to your wooden walls, but to your steam and your scientific improvements, and, like true philosophers, place confidence in your free trade, and depend upon it free trade will be your panacea for all the evils that may befall you." He had shown, then, the hon. Member for Lambeth, he hoped, that so far from the years he had taken proving his argument, they proved that the hon. Gentleman and those sitting round him were advocating laws the effect of which they said was to secure cheap prices. To turn now for a moment to the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government. Mr. Canning once said in that House—and never did any sarcasm contain a greater truth—"that nothing in it was so deceitful as figures, unless it were facts." But if Mr. Canning were there now, he would have seen something more subtle than figures, more deceitful than facts, viz., the public principles on which public men proposed to conduct the Government of the country. He (Mr. Borthwick) said so, because he believed it, and because he thought that the right hon. Gentleman would agree with him—and particularly if he could show it on the authority of the right hon. Gentleman himself—that he (Sir R. Peel) drew diametrically opposite conclusions from the same facts. When the right hon. Gentleman addressed his constituents at Tamworth in 1841—and he (Mr. Borthwick) referred to this to show the dexterous ingenuity by which he (Sir Robert Peel) could, at different times, draw opposite conclusions from the same facts—in 1841, at Tamworth, when asked his opinion upon the Corn Laws, the right hon. Gentleman referred to Mr. McCulloch, and quoted from his work on the subject:—

"The price of wheat in England, at an average of the ten years ending with 1820, was no less than 83s. 6d. a quarter. Its average price has since, as we have just seen, been reduced to 56s. 11½d. a quarter, and yet, notwithstanding this tremendous fall, a most extraordinary improvement has taken place in agriculture since 1820; so much so, that we now provide for an additional population of at least seven millions, not only without any increase, but with a very considerable diminution of importation. Considering the vast importance of agriculture, that nearly half the population of the Empire are, directly or indirectly, dependent on it for employment and the means of subsistence, a prudent statesman would pause before he gave his sanction to any measure, however sound

in principle, or beneficial to the mercantile and manufacturing classes, that might endanger the prosperity of agriculture, or check the rapid spread of improvement."

In this passage the right hon. Baronet repeated and adopted M'Culloch, in 1841, on the hustings at Tamworth; and yet there, in the House of Commons, in 1846, he made these observations:—

"I will say that nothing can be more erroneous than the notion that the interests of agriculture are necessarily and intimately interwoven with the price of wheat. . . . I shall, however, be sincerely disappointed if any such reduction in the price of wheat should take place as would seriously injure the agricultural interest of this country; but what I want to show is, that agricultural prosperity has no necessary connexion with the price of wheat. I take it as admitted, that there never was a period in which science was so much applied to agriculture, in which the improvements were so great, and the cost of production so reduced, as during the last three or four years. Then what has been the price of wheat? There is in this country a natural tendency to decline in the price of wheat, apart from legislation. In the ten years ending with 1805, the price of wheat was 81s. 2d. In the ten years ending with 1815, it was 97s. 6d.; 1825, 78s. 3d.; 1835, 56s. 6d.; 1845, 57s. 11d.; and during the last four months, 51s. 10d.; so that, during that period, there has been a fall in the price of wheat from 97s. 6d. and 81s. 2d. to 51s. 10d.; and yet agricultural prosperity was never more marked—agricultural improvement more extensive; and therefore, if there should be a continual fall in the price of wheat, do not attribute it all to the change in your laws; for it may be the result of the improvements which you are carrying into operation."

The right hon. Gentleman here—continuing his figures, too, down to the very period at which he was speaking—made use of the same facts in 1841; and yet he drew from them the very opposite conclusion from that at which he then arrived, and said that, considering the potato famine in Ireland, and that prices had so diminished under protection, "it was the part of a prudent statesman" at once to remove all protection from agriculture. But, to pursue the argument of the hon. Member for Lambeth, here was a proof that, under the protection which had prevailed for half a century, prices had diminished. The right hon. Gentleman the late Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Baring) had told them the other night, that all their legislation had tended to a removal of protection; but the right hon. Gentleman the present Secretary of State for the Home Department had assured the House that this argument was quite a mistake, because he had told it that the effect of the measure of 1842 was that of greater stringency on importation than had been produced by any of

those measures in regard to corn which had preceded it. They found, then, practically, that exactly in the proportion in which protection had been maintained—in proportion as protection had been made more stringent—exactly in that proportion had agriculture flourished, and the price of wheat diminished to the people of this country. These were simple facts—plain figures, accessible to all the world—and he should be glad to hear from some hon. Member something like an answer to them. For his own part, he confessed he had heard none, either during the twelve nights' discussion they had had on the Corn Law Resolutions, or in any of the speeches which had been made in the present debate on the second reading of this Bill; and yet this was by no means the first time on which they had been introduced to the notice of the House. Whilst he (Mr. Borthwick) was quoting Mr. Canning, he believed the right hon. Gentleman (Sir R. Peel) cheered; but he was at a loss to know what was the meaning of that cheer, unless it was to be found in this, that he (Mr. Borthwick) had been an undeviating supporter of the right hon. Baronet up to the moment when he heard the words to which he had referred fall from his lips, and had defended him from the charges which he had thought had been unjustly brought against his Government. When he saw in the *Times* the announcement which, by some well-arranged contrivance, had reached the columns of that journal, he was one of those who had said that he believed it to be impossible that the right hon. Gentleman could have so changed his opinions, and had proclaimed his conviction that, if he had so changed his own opinions, he would not ask himself, or any other of his former supporters, to change theirs, in the present Parliament at all events. Even after the Speech from Her Majesty, at the commencement of the Session, and after the right hon. Gentleman had given therein a shadowy outline of his future measures—even after they had been told that their previous relaxations of commercial laws had worked so well that they were advised to proceed further in the same course—even after these declarations he had still given the right hon. Gentleman his unlimited confidence. He had asked himself whether he had any reason to regret the vote which, in common with other Gentlemen then around him, he had given, by which he had helped to place him in power, and to displace the

noble Lord the Member for London from office. "True," he had said to himself, "the right hon. Gentleman may propose some alteration of the Corn Laws—true, he may propose some modification of our commercial system—I am not averse from taking such changes or modifications into consideration; but I will not believe, till I hear it from the lips of the right hon. Gentleman himself, that, considering the burden of our taxation, and the artificial state of our social relations, he will propose, at least to this Parliament, the complete removal of protection from corn." He had thus interpreted, then, the cheer of the right hon. Baronet; and he would now ask him to say whether the right hon. Gentlemen or himself was right as to the opinion which the country entertained upon this subject. And, speaking of the opinions of the country, let him remind the House that appeals had been made to it in Westminster, in East Gloucestershire, in Nottinghamshire, and elsewhere, which showed that the country was not in favour of the right hon. Gentleman's measures. He doubted not that the Government had no other than the most sincere conviction that upon these measures rested the welfare of their country; and he could readily believe that they were so *pénétrés* with a sense of their importance, that, whatever might be the opinion of the country in respect of them, they were determined to overcome all the difficulties by which the measures were beset, and, inasmuch as they thought they could carry them, to risk all the consequences, and trust to posterity. Well, they would trust to posterity; but would the House allow him to repeat to it why it was that he felt it his duty to give his opposition to Her Majesty's Government on these questions; and to give it, he could assure them, with greater pain at being compelled to take that course than he had ever felt upon any subject of political importance? And here let him observe, that his noble and hon. Friends around him required no aid of his in furtherance of the great cause they had undertaken; and he stood there in aid of no party, great or small. But he did stand there to record his vote, in a sentence in which that House was called upon to pronounce its opinion upon a great question, by which the powerful few were to be benefited at the expense of the weak and working many; and upon a matter with which posterity had no more to do than this—that they were anticipating the estate of posterity, and squandering it in

order to make place for the miserable Mammon-collected capital which was the god of their idolatry. He had referred to the quotations of hon. Gentlemen opposite, and he would now beg to refer to Burke's celebrated "Essay on Scarcity," and only for the purpose of confirming the view which he had taken. Mr. Burke said—

"Never since I have known England have I known more than a comparative scarcity. The price of wheat, taking a number of years together, has had no very considerable fluctuations, nor has it risen exceedingly until within the last twelve months. Even now, I do not know of one man, woman, or child, that has perished for famine—fewer, if any, than in years of plenty, when such things may happen by accident. This is owing to a care and superintendence of the poor far greater than I remember. The consideration of this ought to blind us all, rich and poor together, against those wicked writers of the newspapers who would inflame the poor against their friends, guardians, patrons, and protectors."

He concludes—

"Let us be saved from too much wisdom of our own, and we shall do tolerably well."

Now he (Mr. Borthwick) believed these measures of the Government to be destructive to the interests of posterity, and destructive to those whom they called the labouring poor; and, in saying this, he made no distinction between those classes who employed their industry in the cultivation of the soil, and those who, under all the improvements of science and invention, mingled their labour with the labour of machinery in Manchester and their other great manufacturing towns; for he firmly believed that both classes of labourers, both the agricultural and the manufacturing workmen, were vitally concerned in the question before the House. Some of the advocates of these measures said, "Give the poor cheap bread;" but others said, in advocating them, that their effect would be, not to cheapen bread, but to increase trade. But he would ask, how did they affect the Colonies? The hon. and learned Member for Liskeard had said that the Canadas were not at all alarmed at the prospect: but if he (Mr. Borthwick) might rely on the contents of a letter from Montreal, dated February 25, and which appeared in the *Liverpool Standard* of the 24th instant, he thought it contained very important and trustworthy evidence on that point. It was an extract from a letter from a member of an eminent firm in America, and was to the following effect:—

"Montreal, Feb. 25.

"The possibility of an American war, which,

until the arrival of the packet, was the all-engrossing topic, seems now to be viewed as but of minor importance, contrasted with the evil likely to result to the province from the contemplated changes in the Corn Laws and the duties generally.

"Landed property here is now regarded as worth fifty per cent. less than it was previous to the arrival of the packet. Of course, the worst view is the one in which it is now looked at.

"With regard to the immediate effect of these changes in our produce market, the prevailing opinion seems to be that the dearth of bread stuffs at home will neutralize, to a great extent, the evil that would otherwise have resulted from them, at least for this season. It is not expected that flour will fall in price immediately.

"It is thought it will open at something between 25s. 6d. to 30s."

And now, when they looked at the faith by which this House had pledged itself to Canada, in the Canada Corn Bill, he confessed he could scarcely understand how the hon. Gentlemen opposite connected the maintenance of the British Colonies with measures like the present. What he wished to know was, why it should be considered necessary that this country should be dependent upon any other parties for its food than its own native cultivators and the industrious inhabitants of its Colonies—provided that the labour of each were adequately protected. And to this principle they had nothing opposed but the vainest theories that ever possessed the brain of man. They could not point to any single authority who had written on political economy, and sustained the views of public policy which they who supported these measures were advocating. The Government had stated that they entertained those measures in consequence of a scarcity abroad, and on account of an apprehended scarcity of food in Ireland; but what said that greatest of all authorities upon political economy, Edmund Burke, upon the subject? In his "Thoughts on Scarcity" he said—

"Of all things an indiscreet tampering with the trade of provisions is the most dangerous, and it is always worst in the time when men are most disposed to it—that is, in the time of scarcity. Because there is nothing on which the passions of men are so violent, and their judgment so weak, and on which there exist such a multitude of ill-grounded prejudices."

And yet they referred to Burke as an authority for introducing measures of free trade, simply because there was an apprehended scarcity of food, and upon no other grounds. They also quoted from Deacon Hume; but although Deacon Hume was, in the abstract, a free trader, and in favour of a relaxation of prohibitory duties, still he practically recommended a fixed duty;

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and in his letters to the *Morning Chronicle*, which were afterwards collected and published in a pamphlet, he denounced those laws as a violation of the laws of God, and the rights of man: he trembled at the idea of free trade. And to show that he was adverse to such a principle, he earnestly proposed the adoption of a fixed duty similar to that suggested by the noble Lord the Member for the city of London (Lord John Russell). Then Mr. M'Culloch had also been referred to; but Mr. M'Culloch and others who had written upon the science of political economy, had never lost a single opportunity of stigmatizing as stupid and factious exaggerations the theories of the hon. Member for Stockport and the other Gentlemen who advocated principles of free trade. What said Mr. M'Culloch?—

"The injurious influence of the existing Corn Law has been stupidly and factiously exaggerated. Still, however, it is incontestable that the sliding scale is productive of great loss and inconvenience; and we have seen that the substitution of a fixed duty of 5s. or 6s. a quarter, to countervail the peculiar burdens falling on land, would be a signal improvement."

Dr. Adam Smith and Mr. Ricardo all had denounced the principle of absolute free trade as fatal and injurious to the industry of the country; and yet they were told that such principles as those which had been proposed for adoption were to be classed with the wisdom of our ancestors. The hon. Gentleman the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. G. Vernon) had used an extraordinary argument. Although the hon. Member for Liskeard (Mr. C. Buller) had sported upon the borders of extravagance—and he was one of those hon. Members who had a right, perhaps, to make so free—yet the hon. Member for Bassetlaw, when taunting hon. Gentlemen at his (Mr. Borthwick's) side of the House with over-devotion to the wisdom of their ancestry, had delivered a speech in ridicule of that wisdom of a description such as he had never had the misfortune to hear before. Yet the hon. Gentleman was addressing an assemblage of Englishmen in the nineteenth century, in a country whose rapid spread of civilization had gained for it the leading position among the nations of the earth, and had desired them to ridicule the inspirations of Shakspeare, Milton, and Burke—men who had immortalized their language, and who had been charged with high missions for the civilization of mankind. But the opinions of such men were to be discarded, and their wisdom ridiculed. The wisdom of

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such a man as Newton—Newton, who studied the heavens, and revealed to man the wonderful mystery by which the Almighty suspended the Heavens in space!—those lights of a generation that had passed away, were to be forsaken for the hon. Member for Bassettlaw, and the opinions and principles of a Sheridan, a Fox, or a Burke, were to be forgotten, in order that homage might be offered at the feet of that hon. Gentleman! The hon. Gentleman, with a ludicrous and strange self-complacency, had told them that in following the wisdom of their ancestors they were abandoning the wisdom best calculated to promote the interests of the country; but he (Mr. Borthwick) would tell him that in the history of human character, there had not been one solitary instance in which any man who despised the wisdom that had gone before him, had left behind him an example of adding to its stock. The authorities he had referred to bore him out in his assertion, because they had all admired the wisdom of those who had gone before them. They were reminded from the Treasury benches of the stores of science at command, of the power of steam and machinery, and appealed to whether by the hand of science they could not charge the lightning with a message, and that its obedient will would bring back a return. But who, he would ask, had invented the steam engine, or made those wonderful discoveries in chemistry which had been productive of so much advantage to mankind? Had they not all been admirers of the wisdom of our ancestors? But upon what grounds had the country been called upon by Her Majesty's Ministers to make those important changes? The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government (Sir R. Peel) had talked of famine in Ireland; and the noble Lord opposite (Lord J. Russell) had mentioned the same cause prospectively; but the noble Lord had been rather guarded in his allusions since his celebrated letter to the electors of the city of London. He (Mr. Borthwick) had looked to the state of Ireland, and in common with all who had listened to the speech of the hon. and learned Member for the University of Dublin (Mr. Shaw) had heard with the utmost satisfaction the statements made by that hon. Gentleman. There could be but one feeling of satisfaction among all who heard those statements. He was sure nothing could make them dissatisfied unless they doubted their truth. The truth of them, however, could not be doubted, for the

prices of the cereal therein quoted corroborated their truth. The noble Lord opposite (Lord J. Russell) and his late Colleagues in office, were shy of touching upon the subject, and therefore saw the propriety of not committing themselves. The noble Lord the Member for the city of London, and the noble Lord close to him (Lord Morpeth) had escaped from the responsibility which was thrown upon the right hon. Baronet; but would the support and gratitude of the former be extended to the Government after the present measures were carried? Would the right hon. Baronet find in the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden) and the Gentlemen who surrounded him, better followers than those he had abandoned; or would they not seize the first opportunity to return to that power from which the late followers of the right hon. Baronet had dislodged them? But why, he would ask, were the measures proposed by the Government for adoption more advantageous now than before? Did the repeal of the Corn Laws embrace everything? Was there no Church in England? Was there no Church in Ireland? Was there no Factory question, and were there no Poor Laws? Did none of those great principles remain? Yes, they all remained; but the effect of the right hon. Baronet's carrying this law, would be to deliver the country which confided in him, (not a party, but the country itself,) and its poor industrious classes, with all its vast dependencies, bound hand and foot, to the mischievous policy of hon. Gentlemen opposite. It behoved every Gentleman to give a candid vote, and he agreed with the noble Lord opposite (Lord J. Russell), that every vote ought to be given on the assumption that it would carry the measure. His vote, he assured the House, would be given with due regard to the importance of the subject, and in a totally disinterested manner. The hon. Gentleman who sat near him, had been asked what measures they were prepared to propose were they to form an Administration? But that was a question upon which he congratulated the hon. Member for Lynn for maintaining silence, because, if the question were answered, it might give the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government the Budget he was fishing for, and he might adopt their policy; or, as the hon. Member for Shrewsbury had facetiously remarked, he might, finding them bathing, run away with their clothes. The noble Lord opposite (Lord

J. Russell) would no doubt keep his counsel upon this question; but he (Mr. Borthwick) maintained that if his vote were the casting vote, and if he were told his voting one way would carry or defeat the measures proposed by the Government—viewing and not being ignorant of all the inconvenience to commerce and danger to society which would result from a dissolution of Parliament at this moment—still he would feel himself bound to vote precisely as he now felt himself bound to vote against the measure of the Government. He would in that case be responsible to God and his country, and posterity, for the judgment which they would pass upon him for the honest exercise of that right, by which he believed he would secure from imminent danger the fortunes of a great and powerful Empire. He had upon the present occasion advocated, at great disadvantage, the opinions he held, because he did not expect he would have been fortunate enough to address the House that night, and therefore was not so well prepared to do justice either to himself or to the cause he wished to support. He was most desirous he should not be misunderstood, that the principle upon which he recorded his vote against Her Majesty's Ministers, was not upon the principle of party or of faction—it was not from any desire to see a new party, or to unseat the Government—to see hon. Gentlemen opposite occupying their places; but because he considered that, in adopting the wild and theoretical legislation proposed, the House would be seriously injuring the interests of the country. When the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) changed his opinions, it recalled to his (Mr. Borthwick's) mind the reply of a distinguished physician, whom Moliere made ridiculous, but whom the right hon. Baronet had exalted to the sublime. When Malgre Lui was told that the heart was situated not on the right, but on the left side, he coolly replied, "*Nous avons changé tout cela.*" Thus it was with the right hon. Baronet. He sought to make all those changes in the body politic, but without assigning any valid reason. He (Mr. Borthwick) trusted the agricultural interest would long continue to afford to the world an example of that meek and honest worth which had made this country the most renowned in the world. If in the nineteenth century it continued to maintain its supremacy, and to stand unrivalled in all that tended to civilize and enlighten mankind, that fame, he believed,

was due to the modest worth, the patient industry, the great intelligence, and the heaven-born piety of the peasantry of England. He implored the House to beware how it trampled upon their rights, and discarded their interests. He did not tax Hon. Gentlemen opposite (the free traders), who were connected with manufacturing and mercantile pursuits, with insincerity in the course they were adopting; but he could not forget that their experience was limited, and that they were not associated with the labouring classes employed in agriculture like the Gentlemen who sat behind him upon the protection benches. Hon. Gentlemen opposite, it was true, were now in the habit of employing large numbers of persons; but then those persons were often discharged at the end of a week, and returning pale, worn, and emaciated, from the din and turmoil of a large manufacturing town, where could they find employment and shelter? Could they find it in the agricultural parishes from which they had gone forth while yet health and strength were theirs? No; the only shelter they could find would be in that gloomy receptacle, the workhouse, which the present law afforded them. He believed that if this measure were passed into law, the condition of the peasantry of England would be much aggravated, and it was under that impression that he ventured to oppose, humbly, but earnestly, the scheme of the Government. He begged to thank the House for the great patience with which it had heard him; and he ventured to express the hope that hon. Gentlemen opposite would follow the example of hon. Members behind him, and not rise till they had something to say, and sit down when they had finished. If they followed the example set them by his Friends, there would be no necessity to taunt hon. Gentlemen at his side of the House with a desire to delay the debate, or retard the adjustment of the question. The resistance which he and the Friends whom he saw around him were making, was a consistent and not a factious one; and whatever might ultimately be the result, he and the party whose principles he supported would come out of the struggle with nothing but credit to themselves.

MR. C. BULLER was exceedingly obliged to the hon. Member for Evesham for the personal compliments which he had paid him; but the hon. Gentleman did him injustice when he accused him (Mr. C...

Buller) of having laughed at Gentlemen opposite when they quoted the "wisdom of our ancestors." What he complained of was, not of their always quoting that wisdom, so much as of their never following it. Our ancestors were doubtless wise men; but what he marvelled at—what he laughed at—was at their descendants and admirers so often keeping to every foolish saying or doing which their fathers had lapsed into, while they neglected the landmarks they had left of extended knowledge and true wisdom. For, whenever the "wisdom of our ancestors" was mentioned—their most sagacious sayings, their most solemn declarations—up got the hon. Member for Evesham to repeat the quotations, and apply them as supporting the policy of his party; while hon. Gentlemen behind cheered him on, without for one moment minding whether the citations told for or against themselves and their cause, so long as they were made by somebody on their side of the House. If he wished to quote the "wisdom of our ancestors" against restrictive laws, he should quote precisely those two sentences which at different times had been cited by the hon. Member for Evesham from the writings of Burke. He should warn the House against the folly of tampering with the subsistence of the people. He should tell the House, when they were proposing a law by which to insure a supply of food and of employment for the people, he should remind them, from Burke, that a people maintained a Government, but that no Government could maintain a people. One great feature, however, of the wisdom of our ancestors, compared with that of their descendants, was the comparative brevity of their debates. He did not believe that, in the Parliamentary history of this or any other country could be found such a phenomenon as a three weeks' debate upon one Motion. [Hon. MEMBERS: Look to America.] He could hardly quote America in talking of the wisdom of our ancestors. But he did maintain that he had never heard of our forefathers debating a Motion for three weeks: and though he was willing to do justice to the strength and the variety of the arguments of the hon. Gentlemen opposite, yet he thought that they would have exhibited both to more advantage had they detailed them at half their length. He was not going to plunge into the subject of free trade. This was altogether too late a stage of the business for him to adopt such a course. Besides, it was a

subject on which the good sense of mankind had made up the opinions of the world long ago; and whatever ingenuity hon. Gentlemen might show, they would find it impossible to persuade the world that the way to secure a cheap and constant supply of an article was to limit the range from whence that supply could be drawn; while they would find the task equally hard of persuading the world that they, or the sellers of any other commodity, ought to have more than the fair market price for their ware. He believed he might assume that, since 1815, there was to be perceived in the conduct of public men a general admission that, in dealing with corn, they had acted upon the feeling that it was to be considered in the light of an exception from the general principles of trade. A right hon. Friend of his had rightly explained the purpose and object of the law of 1815, when he described it as having arisen from the great demand for corn during war time, the consequent quantity of land taken into cultivation, and the bargains made upon the faith of a continuance of high prices. In order to preserve these last the Legislature deemed it wise to restrict the import of foreign corn. He must own, however, that the conduct of all successive Governments and public men had shown that they were impressed with the idea that, in dealing with the Corn Laws, the great principle to be kept in view was that of gradual relaxation, in the hope that they might be ultimately entirely done away with. Now, they had heard much lately of the merits of consistency. For himself he could claim no such merit; for, two or three years ago, he had voted for restriction in the trade in corn. But he at the same time could not admit that men could not change their opinions upon a point without gross inconsistency. Therefore, he felt that in defending the right hon. Baronet opposite from the charge, he was also defending himself, as well as others who had changed their opinions: not that he would be inclined to load with indiscriminating eulogy right hon. Gentlemen opposite. He thought that they had shown a want of foresight in 1841 in not saying "these laws cannot be long kept up—we shall, therefore, prepare the country gradually for the adoption of perfect free trade." On the contrary, however, they fell into the error of imagining that the Corn Laws could be maintained much longer than it was possible that they could be kept up. Since then,

however, symptoms of a coming change were one after another manifest; hon. Gentlemen below the gangway blamed the Ministers for inconsistency when they should blame their own want of perception. He did think that there had been abundant indication that the convictions of the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government in favour of the Corn Laws were undergoing a gradual but great alteration. Year after year he gave up some argument in their favour. First, there was their alleged effect of producing steadiness of price—that consideration was thrown overboard. Then came the argument about dependence on foreigners—that met the same fate—and so on. The right hon. Baronet went on discarding one argument after another, until, as he (Mr. C. Buller) remembered, the general remark on this side of the House was, “Why, on what grounds are these Corn Laws to stand, as all the considerations in their favour are thus successively abandoned? And, in fact, for the last year or two, they had stood on nothing more secure than the annual promise which the Duke of Richmond managed to extract, that the Corn Laws should not be altered that year. He certainly thought that Ministers should have commenced the work much earlier; but the great and interesting question for consideration now was—“Under existing circumstances, can the Corn Laws be maintained any longer?” He thought it but fair to right hon. Gentlemen opposite to admit that the change of opinion which they now condemned was of long and gradual growth. He never could believe that, under all circumstances, men of sense could go on to the end as they started in the beginning. He blamed no man for changing his opinion, especially a particular opinion of this kind, with regard to which circumstances must exercise a great influence. But who—who had experienced a change in his own opinion, as he confessed he had experienced many since he came into that House—who could say—certainly he, for his own part, could not—who could tell the exact moment when a change of opinion took place? He repeated he could not point to the exact moment when he threw the Corn Laws overboard, and took up his present opinions. Probably, after he was really convinced, he went on in the old course for some time from habit. Nobody could point to the precise period when they gave up one set of opinions and took to another;

but the right hon. Gentlemen opposite gave from time to time plain indications of the change gradually working in their minds. With that conviction going on, how did circumstances operate in the autumn of last year? Hon. Gentlemen opposite had laughed at the arguments founded upon Irish famine, and had told the House that they were no arguments at all. And here he must say, that those hon. Gentlemen had shown a good deal of that inconsistency with which they were ready to reproach others: for let it be remembered that they had not been in the same mind as to the existence of scarcity in Ireland during the course of these debates. Nothing could be more marked than their tone in the early part of the debate in admitting the existence of circumstances of great distress. [“No, no!”] Why, they allowed that there was distress, against which the Government was bound to provide. The hon. Member for Somerset admitted that it was the duty of Government to open the ports, and suspend for a time the Corn Laws. [An Hon. Member: Assuming the existence of the distress.] He told them that it was not until they found how they had, by their own admission, cut the whole argument from under their feet, that they had bethought themselves of bringing forward the Gentlemen who had lately attempted to deny the existence of famine in Ireland. It did seem to him that, with such a calamity impending, or even possible, in any part of the country, that for hon. Gentlemen to come forward, and on such evidence to deny the existence of the potato failure, and to recommend the House not to take any precautions against it; and in the teeth of evidence of the most decisive nature, that the calamity was imminent—such a course was not one he should like to pursue. Talk of their denial of famine in Ireland; why, at first to admit it was the whole gist of their speeches. Then they moved round; and that there was no famine, and ought to be no precautions, became the burden of their song. [“No, no!”] Did they mean to say that they came forward and, in the first instance, denied the danger of famine. No, they said that Government ought to take precautions against it. But now, when it was suitable to their party views, they denied the existence of scarcity altogether; and the right hon. Member for the University of Dublin came forward with private letters and hearsay stories to contradict

the most irrefutable public evidence furnished by public functionaries of all grades, beginning with the Lord Lieutenant, and ending with the authorities of Poor Law Unions. All these authorities told the same tale of scarcity existing, and famine and fever impending; but some hon. Gentlemen there were who could still see nothing in the present state of Ireland, or at least would see nothing in its present state, but what tallied with their favourite arguments. We might have what proof we would of coming fever and coming famine; but the only spectre from which they recoiled was that of abundance. It seemed to him, then, that this famine it was impossible to deny. Hon. Gentlemen once admitted its existence by offering their assistance in averting it. The hon. Member for Lincoln had told the House that he would subscribe 300*l*. [Colonel SIBTHORP: I should like to know what you will give.] Sorry should he be to remind the hon. and gallant Member of an inconvenient promise. He mentioned the fact, thinking it greatly to the hon. and gallant Member's honour. He thought nothing could be more handsome than his offer, and he was quite sure that the hon. and gallant Member would stand by his word. But when he and others subscribed, let them recollect that the whole weight of the Corn Laws would fall upon them—they would be paying an increased price for the supply of the starving people of Ireland. Why, was not the common-sense plan the suspension of the duties and the free admission of cheap food? But, then, it was said the Government might have opened the ports, but where was the necessity for altering the Corn Laws? He would ask hon. Gentlemen to recollect one or two facts connected with this subject. Since the year 1815 Government had only once opened the ports by an Order in Council. It occurred in 1826, under the Ministry of Mr. Canning. Did that Cabinet propose to dispense for a time with the Corn Laws, without altering them? Why, the first thing they did was to ask for an Act of Indemnity for themselves, and to propose those alterations in the Corn Law, which after several changes—not as he thought for the better—were embodied in the law of 1828. The great argument against a fixed duty was, "let a time of scarcity once come, the opening of the ports could not be resisted," and no one would have the hardihood to propose its renewal. Was it likely that the right hon. Gentleman, if he once

consented to open the ports would re-enact his own law, which confessedly had not answered its purpose? He wanted to ask the protectionists one question—the ports once open, when would they shut them? They heard very consolatory stories about the new crops of potatoes, and experiments made by the Duke of Portland, which he supposed the Irish peasantry were to follow; and one hon. Member was so good as to take a young potato out of his pocket, and show the House that there was no disease in it. Why, none of them were diseased until after they had been put by for food. Could we look at those and be sure of the next crop? The example of what occurred in America was fraught with warning, for in three successive years there was an increase of the disease in the potatoes: no Government could with common prudence have legislated for Ireland without considering the probability that the emergency of this year would be that of the next. Would you have had the Government open the ports, and shut them in September, believing they would have to open them by Order in Council next year—or would you have them open the ports for an indefinite period, and still keep the law unaltered? It would have been impossible for the Government to have retained the Corn Law under such circumstances. The feeling, therefore, of the right hon. Baronet must have been that the Corn Law would not be permanent, and that the necessity for altering it increased year by year; and no hon. Gentleman opposite had ventured to say that it was to be retained for ever. His hon. Friend the Member for Northamptonshire admitted that he could not say that it was a permanent law, and he spoke of alteration at a period which he did not specify. With this conviction, that the law was not permanent, and the pressure of distress in Ireland, were there no other circumstances which pointed out the present as a time when this change might be made with peculiar facility and slight risk? One of the greatest fears which had been expressed as to the effect of this alteration, was the increase of the supply from abroad. They were guaranteed now, that for some time to come there will be little importation of food from abroad. The circumstances of Europe guard against any sudden alteration in the price of corn. Another fear was, that labourers would be thrown out of employ. The demand for labour was never so great as now. The

demand caused by the formation of railways showed that this was a fitting time for a change which might affect the labourer. A third reason which had weighed with the Government, was the influence which our change of policy might have on that of other nations. He had heard many jokes made upon the chimerical nature of the right hon. Baronet's hopes that Prussia would be influenced by the change in our Corn Law. He saw last autumn in a foreign paper that, in the Council of the Zollverein held last year, the Prussian delegates used all their influence to induce a reduction of duties. Conceive how much you would strengthen the voice of Prussia at the Council of the Germanic League, if you would supply her with the argument that free trade was established here. Was there nothing in the present position of the United States which made it a fitting moment to relax our commercial policy? He would not advert to questions of a delicate nature. He would not speak of the hostility to this country which had been expressed there, and which he did not believe was the sober sense of the people. He would not speak of the probability of diminishing the chance of war by the relaxation of our commercial policy; but he would merely advert to the fact that the question of their tariff was now under consideration—that they were debating their tariff at the same time that we were debating ours. It was stated the other night that there were many manufacturers in America, and especially in the Northern States, who are averse to any relaxation. Why, the Americans might just as well say, that the agriculturists in this country, and the Duke of Richmond, were averse to our change in the Corn Law; but we say that we have the majority, and can prevent their opposition being effectual. In that way they paraded the minority in America to support their opinion. In the last election a great deal turned upon the question of the tariff; and in Congress there was a decided majority in favour of relaxation in commercial policy. There never was a moment in which it was more likely that if England relaxed her policy, she would meet with a corresponding relaxation in the United States. On these grounds he believed they were wrong in finding fault with the right hon. Baronet for the course he had pursued. We have a right to find fault with him for maintaining the law so long as he has. They have no such right, for he has maintained it for them longer

than any one else could, or than they could have maintained it without him. They should thank him for the kindness he had shown them, and at once admit that the right hon. Gentleman was now yielding to a necessity against which he could no longer struggle. But when he said that the other party had a right to blame the right hon. Gentleman for the past, he felt the greatest admiration for the course which he now pursued. If he had not listened to the voice of argument and truth sufficiently soon, he had certainly now propounded his measure of relief in a frank and determined spirit. No man, even of his enemies, had ventured to impugn his motives. He believed, if the right hon. Gentleman had acted on the vulgar views of party, and determined to go along with his own, right or wrong, he might have relied on a majority, and kept up those laws some time longer. But the result would have been in the end fatal not only to the Corn Laws, but to far more important interests. He must say that the most degrading policy a public man could pursue was, having changed his opinion, to give a vote which his reason condemned; to repeat arguments, of the fallacy of which he was convinced; and to impose on the country a policy which he believed to be dangerous. Such a course must lead to the belief that the position of a party leader and chief Minister of the Crown, instead of being one of honour and dignity, would become one of the most dishonourable to which any man could attain. He should touch on one other argument. It was said the Parliament should be dissolved, and the sense of the people taken. To a certain extent he admitted there was some validity in that argument. If the right hon. Gentleman thought the repeal of those laws was against the sense of the country, he should say the experiment was not only unfair, but exceedingly dangerous, because the inevitable consequence would be, that on the assembling of a new Parliament the Act would be reversed, and the Corn Law restored. But really, after the decisive majority with which the question was carried, there was no ground for supposing that the party opposite would increase their numbers by a single unit in the event of an appeal to the country. "Oh, but," said they, "try." Grave reasons alone should induce a Minister to appeal to the country; and, in his opinion, the present state of the question of repeal furnished no such ground. The arguments

of the protectionists, on this point, were some of the oddest. A free trader was returned in Westminster; and that, they said, was a great triumph to them. It was true he had heard of 400 protectionist voters being about to be brought up by the Duke of Richmond to turn the scale, but he never heard of their setting up a candidate on their own account. The result of the election must be taken as a proof that a majority of the people of Westminster were in favour of free trade. He should grant all the most sanguine notions of the protectionists, that they carried all the small towns and agricultural boroughs; and in that way, with the counties, obtained a majority—it would be impotent to keep up the Corn Laws, and the whole representative system would be brought tumbling about their ears. Take but the North Riding of Yorkshire, his noble Friend (Lord Morpeth) and his Colleague walked up to the House, the representative (as correctly as he could make the calculation) of twenty-three county Members. The protectionists did not pretend they could alter the representation, the metropolitan representation, or that of the city, or of the county of Middlesex. Why, these represented more persons than 240 boroughs. He asked the protectionists, then, had they not sometimes trembled at the consequences of their own possible success? If they attempted to pursue a course which the great and intelligent majority condemned, so surely would a second Reform Bill be proposed, which it would be impossible to resist. He warned them of the ground on which they were treading; and before they followed it up in that and the other House, he put it to them whether they would excite the public mind to the consideration of questions of far more importance to the interests of the people of this country than the Corn Laws. They talked of "conservative policy;" but never was there a more sagacious upholder of that policy than the right hon. Gentleman, when he resolved to give up laws which were the cause of great heartburning and discontent amongst the people.

Lord G. BENTINCK said: Sir, the hon. and learned Gentleman who has just sat down commenced his observations to the House by stating that the universal common sense of mankind was agreed in the principles of free trade. Why, Sir, I think when the hon. and learned Gentleman looks to the opinions of the people of the United States of America—when he

looks to the opinions of the monarch and people of Prussia—when he looks to the opinions of the people of France and her Government—when he looks to the united opinions of the Zollverein of Germany—and when he looks to the opinions of Russia—he must have paused before he came to the conclusion that the united common sense of all mankind was in favour of free trade. The three tailors of Tooley Street once mistook their opinions for the opinions of the united people of England; and so it is, I think, with the hon. and learned Gentleman. He mistakes the opinions of a party which, until the month of November last, was but a small minority in this House, for the universal common sense of all mankind. Sir, the hon. and learned Gentleman has made several observations with regard to the course that those around me have taken, and the opinions we have formed in respect of the alleged potato famine in Ireland. I believe, Sir, and every day convinces me more and more, that the alleged potato famine in Ireland has been a gross delusion upon the country. True it is, that we, having had the Ministers of the Crown come down to this House with a Speech from the Throne, stating that a great calamity was hanging over Ireland, and that there had been a great failure—an immense and general failure—in the potato crop; that this House was disposed, in the first instance, to listen to a statement coming from such high authority. Since that time, however, we have had better opportunities of informing ourselves on the subject, for we have had Returns laid on the Table of this House from no less than 414 market towns in Ireland, and the result of those Returns was, that the average price of potatoes per stone throughout the whole of Ireland was a fraction under fourpence. I do not think that the people of England can be persuaded that there is that disastrous failure in the potato crop which some would make them believe. I do not think they will be brought to believe that there was such an absolute failure in the potato crop in Ireland as to produce absolute famine there, when they are told throughout the whole of Ireland the average price of potatoes is not quite 4d. a stone. But we have it, not only from those Returns dated the 24th of January last, and which were laid on the Table of this House, that such was the low average price of potatoes, but we are also informed from the daily newspapers of Ireland, which record the current

prices of potatoes in all the market towns of that country, that instead of potatoes rising in price, as stated by the right hon. Baronet, they are rather falling, in the great majority of the markets. I have by me the prices of potatoes, in, I think, eighty or ninety of the principal markets of Ireland, from which I find that, up to the 24th instant, there were but four market towns, of the whole number stated in the Returns, in which the price of potatoes had risen, while in all the others the prices had remained as they had been stated in the Returns of the 24th of January last, which were laid on the Table of this House. But this is not all. We have it on the authority of an hon. Gentleman who read a letter from Carnarvon, stating that two shiploads of potatoes came over from Ireland to England; and we are also informed that several cargoes of potatoes have come over to this country in the course of the last few days. Why, the prices of potatoes must be rather on the decline than on the rise in Ireland, when they export them to England, where we all know that they have fallen nearly one-half since the month of December last. So that I think I am fully justified in saying that there never was so gross a delusion attempted to be practised upon any country as that which has been attempted to be practised on the people of England by Her Majesty's Government; and this they have attempted, while at the same time they keep out of sight their own great delinquencies and gross inconsistencies in abandoning all those principles which they entertained in former years. It will be in the recollection of the House, that, after much difficulty, I did, some few weeks ago, obtain a declaration from the right hon. Baronet as to what he thought would be the prospective effects of this measure as regarded the price of wheat. The right hon. Baronet gave it as his opinion at last, (he displayed so much courage in 1842, he was not disposed to be so courageous again,) that had free trade in corn existed in 1836, when, as he stated, the average price of wheat in this country was 39s., the price of wheat would not be lower in the markets of this country by a free-trade commerce with foreign countries. The right hon. Baronet said that in 1836 the average price was 39s. The fact is, the average price in 1836 was 46s., and in 1839 the average price was 39s. I am, then, prepared to meet the right hon. Baronet on that question, and I am prepared to show that the prices would necessarily be con-

siderably lower. The way properly to ascertain this will be to look back a little and to see what was the average price of wheat throughout all the markets of Europe in 1836, and then in connexion with those prices to calculate the expenses of freight and other charges, accurately to ascertain at what price wheat could be imported into the port of London. Well, I have ascertained all those facts, that I might be enabled accurately to place the whole subject before the House. I find then, in 1836, in—

Places.	Lowest.		Highest.		Average Price.		Add Freight and Charges.			
	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
Dantzic ...	21	10	34	10	28	4	5 6 1 0		34	10
Rotterdam	20	7	33	4	31	6	5 0 1 0		37	6
Hamburgh	21	1	36	8	29	10½	5 0 1 0		34	10½
Amsterdam	20	6	35	7	28	1	5 0 1 0		34	1
Memel ...	18	1	26	1	22	1	5 6 1 0		28	6
Denmark	0	0	0	0	25	0	6 6	31	6	
Antwerp	18	5	33	9	25	3	5 0 1 0		31	3
Odessa ...	16	2	21	1	18	7½	11 0 1 0		30	7½
Riga, free on board, Polish wheat, 62lbs. per bushel. }					25	7	6 6	32	1	
Riga ditto, Courth do. do. }					27	8	6 6	34	2	
Average price in England, per <i>London Gazette</i> }					40	2		32	11½	

Those prices are all taken from the returns of foreign countries—they are returns which admit of no dispute; and the result of the whole is, that wheat in 1836 could have been imported from those ten different countries into England, and sold at a very considerable profit. The right hon. Baronet gave it as his opinion, and he gave it in this House, that it could not have been imported at a lower rate than 39s. But, I ask, how could he advance such an opinion, when the average price of wheat in England in 1836 was not 39s. but 46s. 2d.? Consequently, it was clear that wheat might be imported from ports of Europe into Mark Lane in 1836, at 13s. 3d. the quarter cheaper than the average price of all England; and when you recollect that in London the average prices of wheat are generally 3s. higher than throughout the whole country, there can be no doubt that if there had been a free-trade commerce in 1836, that the price of wheat would have been reduced far below 39s. a quarter; and I might have taken into calculation the year 1835, as in that year I found the

average price in the whole of England to be 39s. 6d., and which calculations I have made by taking the prices of that year from the reports of the different countries in Europe, finding the result to be in 1835, in—

Places.	Lowest.		Highest		Average Price.	Freights and Charges.		
	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
Dantzic ...	21	0	24	11	22	6	5 6 1 0	20 0
Rotterdam	26	9	31	6	29	1½	5 0 1 0	34 0½
Hamburg	20	9	22	3	21	6	5 0 1 0	27 6
Amsterdam	21	10	26	0	23	10	5 0 1 0	20 10
Memel ...	19	4	26	0	22	8	5 0 1 0	20 2
Antwerp	18	5	21	0	19	9	5 0 1 0	25 9
Odessa ...	16	2	23	2	19	5	11 0 1 0	32 5
Denmark	0	0	0	0	10	0	6 6	25 6
Riga, free on board, Polish wheat, 62 lbs. per bushel					25	2	6 6	31 8
Riga, ditto, Cornith do. do.					27	2	6 6	33 8
Average price in England, per London Gazette					30	4		20 10½

From this calculation it is quite evident that in the year 1835, while the average price of wheat was in England 39s. 4d., the average price was in all the countries in Europe I have enumerated 29s. 10½d., which clearly proves that wheat could be imported into Mark Lane at nearly 10s. a quarter lower. I trust, therefore, I have shewn to the House that the alarm of the farmers of England at this measure of the Government, was by no means visionary; and Her Majesty's Ministers, in introducing this measure, blew hot and cold. In one half of their speeches they affirmed that the farmers needed not to be alarmed, for in looking at the effects of the Tariff in 1842, as seen in the prices, there was every reason to believe that free trade in corn would rather advance than lower the prices; and Her Majesty's Ministers, in addressing themselves to the agricultural Members, turned round and said, that their only object was to have cheap food to remove starvation, want, and misery—to alleviate human suffering. I hope and trust that the right hon. Baronet will be able to answer the positions which I have laid down, and that, as he has given no clear or distinct opinion as to what may be the future operations of his measure, that he will, by arguments or statements, this night do so. Let him do so clearly, distinctly, and satisfactorily—let him also justify the declaration he made as to the

price of wheat in 1836; and if he cannot—and which I am sure he cannot—are we not entitled to ask him to return to those principles which he advocated for a period of thirty years? It has been urged that a free trade in corn is necessary to procure steadiness of prices in this country; and this was one of the principal arguments against the sliding scale, that it had not promoted steadiness of price. I am prepared to show (and I defy the right hon. Baronet to prove the contrary) that since the year 1842 the prices in this country were subject to less variation than in former years. It has also been urged against us that we have given up the sliding scale; but we have not given up the sliding scale. We have not abandoned the sliding scale; and I believe a large portion of the agricultural body are persuaded that the law of 1842 is a law which worked much better than any other law that had been in operation. The prices of the last few years since 1842, are so impressed on every Member, that it may be admitted that while the lowest price in any week since the change of the Corn Laws was 45s. 1d., the highest price for one week, and for one week only, was 60s. 1d.; and when we call to mind that that high price was created by the alarm which was spread, and industriously propagated throughout the country, I think I am justified in saying that when the fluctuation was only between 45s. 1d. and 60s. 1d. in the course of nearly four months, that of it the country had no reason to complain. Let me now see what were the fluctuations in other countries, as exhibited in the following tabular view:—

Places.	Years.	Lowest price.	Years.	Highest price.	Fluctuations per cent.
		s. d.		s. d.	
Dantzic	1835	20 1	1839	60 1	202
New York ...	1836	21 10	1838	61 2	77
Hamburg...	1839	37 0	1838	66 0	192
Amsterdam ..	1835	20 9	1838	58 6	204
Antwerp ...	1835	20 6	1838	63 0	269
Bordeaux ...	1833	15 0	1831	55 6	81
	1834	32 8	1832	50 3	

And let it be recollected that in France they have also a sliding scale.

Fluctuations per cent.	166	106	128	116	201	117	32½
Highest price.	s. d. 40 3	33 0	60 0	39 0	170 0	78 4	60 1
Years.	1831	1830	1831	1831	1839	1838	1845
Lowest price.	s. d. 18 1	10 0	26 5	18 0	56 0	36 0	45 1
Years.	1830	1830	1833	1834	1838	{ 1842 } { 1836 }	1844
Places.	Memel	Odessa	Rotterdam	Denmark	Sydney	England prior to ...	— since 1842, Dec.

In same years—

England varied	1830	68	per cent.
Hamburg	1838	114	"
Antwerp	1831	125	"
Memel	1829	106	"
Ditto	1838	44	"
Dantzic	1838	154	"
Amsterdam	1838	131	"
Bordeaux		59	"
Odessa	1830	106	"
Rotterdam	1838	44	"

If you wish to have wheat at high and low prices, the best course certainly to adopt will be to abandon the sliding scale and to adopt the measures of Her Majesty's Government; but as the great desideratum should be evenness of price, it is nowhere so well to be found as in the law of 1842. The right hon. Baronet said, in speaking of the famine in Ireland, that he could not think of calling on the people of England to pay a duty of 17s.; but I can show this duty of 17s. was paid by us in the profits of the importer from foreign countries. I hold in my hand an invoice which will explain this.

" Rostock, April 17, 1845.

" Cargo of 1,404 quarters of wheat, per Johannes, Captain Neiman:—

	per Quarter.
	s. d.
Invoice, price free on board.....	20 6
Mats for Dunnage.....	0 1½

	per Quarter.
	s. d.
Freight to London	3 6
Metage	0 6
Storage, labourage, and lighterage ...	1 6
Duty	16 0
	49 1½
Mecklenburg wheat, free 61s. to 64s. }	
Say	62 6
Profit.....	13 4½

It has been said by the right hon. the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer that we have abandoned the principle of the sliding scale in expressing our willingness to open the ports; but we never have abandoned the sliding scale. It was said that I spoke in poetic metaphor, and I was begged to express myself in plain intelligible prose. I was afraid I wearied the House on the first introduction of this measure, when I urged that there was no just ground for it. We know, and we have it from the right hon. Baronet himself, that when he proposed to open the ports in December, he had only three Members of the Cabinet, who saw the necessity of their being opened. And the Duke of Wellington, a man of the most masterly mind, stated that though there might be a deficiency in the potato crop, it could not be said that there was any great deficiency of food in Ireland; and he said more, that the present law would of itself meet the exigency: and these are, I believe, the opinions in which my hon. Friends around me concur. But, Sir, the right hon. Gentleman the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his great anxiety—as if all the sweets of office were about to be dashed from his lips—has asked what our policy is? and I feel myself bound to give a comprehensive answer to the right hon. Gentleman. Recollecting, as I do, that the right hon. Gentleman has evinced the most decided opposition to any measure that has been propounded in regard to the Corn Laws—recollecting that I had the honour of supporting him in that opposition up till 1838, and resisting any alteration in the Corn Laws, and that it was not till 1841 that a fixed duty of 8s. a quarter was proposed by the right hon. Gentleman's Colleague—recollecting that when the Corn Law of 1842 was proposed, and finding that the clamour they had raised, and the cry for cheap bread had not been successful in returning a sufficient number of their friends to the House, that they again declared in

favour of a fixed duty; and that it was only in November last that it came across the mind of the noble Lord the Member for the city of London that something was brewing in the Cabinet of Her Majesty's Ministers—that he sought to outbid them—and that he thought the only thing he could do would be to offer free trade—I will tell the right hon. Gentleman the comprehensive advice that I am prepared to give to this House and the country—to follow the advice universally given by the celebrated Doctor Baillie to his patients, to take no more of the remedies previously prescribed; and I would recommend that no more of the remedies prescribed by that side of the House should be attended to. And that is the policy which my hon. Friends, if they should come into office, would pursue, and the advice which they would give to the country; seeing that you do not understand the complaints of the country, they should take no more of your advice, as you do not understand how to treat your patients. With respect to the right hon. Gentlemen on the Treasury benches, who have so lately adopted the opinions of their former opponents, the same recommendation will be equally applicable. The right hon. Gentleman, when calling upon me not to speak in poetical metaphor, must have made some mistake as to the person of whom he was speaking; he must have been thinking of the right hon. Gentleman, who generally draws so largely upon his imagination, and who, on a former occasion, in speaking of the right hon. Gentleman himself, described him (Mr. Baring) as an angler fishing for the Budget, and said a good man struggling against fate was “a sight worthy of the gods.” I think the right hon. Gentleman has been fishing for the Budget from this side of the House. When the right hon. Gentleman ventures to impeach the course we recommend, and states that it would be dangerous to cause a dissolution of Parliament on a question of this exciting nature, with the cry of cheap bread for the people on one side, and protection for domestic industry on the other—when he ventures to tell us that we are setting the agricultural against the manufacturing classes—I must say, that I think he must have a short memory, or he would recollect that the present Parliament now sits by reason of a dissolution obtained by that party of which he is a Member, upon the cry of this very question of cheap

bread; and from the observations that were made by the right hon. Gentleman previous to that dissolution, I should not have expected that he would now have been so alarmed about submitting the question to the consideration of the country. I recollect that the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department, complained that the hon. Gentleman and the noble Lord (Lord John Russell) who sat on the benches opposite, had excited the people, and compared them to the 300 foxes who had firebrands tied to their tails, and were sent into the midst of the standing corn; and I remember also that he compared them to pirates, who would, rather than surrender the ship and their command, apply the torch to the magazine. I would ask my right hon. Friends who occupy the Treasury benches, what do they think of themselves now? If the right hon. Gentleman and the noble Lord opposite are to be compared to pirates, are they not pirates too? Have they not pirated the doctrines, the arguments, and the old speeches of the Anti-Corn-Law League? But I cannot pay you the compliment of saying that you possessed the dare-devil courage of pirates—that, rather than yield to distress and danger, you would apply the torch to the magazine, and sink your ship. I cannot say that you have stood by your ship as long as you could keep her afloat. No; you have left your ship in the dark of the night when you had chartered to carry her home in safety. You have brought her upon a lee-shore, and left her among the breakers. You have placed her under the guns of the enemy's battery whilst your faithful crew were asleep in their hammocks. You have scuttled your ship—you, the captain and lieutenant, master, and mate—you scuttled the ship, stole the compass, sneaked away in the long boat, and deserted to the enemy, hoping that your gallant crew would become an easy prey to those who would board her. But you judged of the mettle of your crew by your own craven hearts, and though for a moment we may have been thrown into confusion, we never have been discouraged—we have rallied from the temporary shock, and we will yet bring the good ship off the lee-shore and carry her safe home to port.

Debate adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Friday, March 27, 1846.

THE GOVERNMENT MEASURES.

Mr. NEWDEGATE wished to ask the right hon. Gentleman the First Lord of the Treasury whether it was his intention to introduce a Bill to afford facilities for draining estates, and for consolidating the highway expenditure? Also, whether it was the intention of Her Majesty's Government to provide for the payment of the schoolmasters of union workhouses, and for the Irish constabulary force, these being the measures which the right hon. Gentleman announced at the commencement of the Session as forming part of the five measures he intended to propose for the consideration of the House, upon the subject of legislation for Ireland?

SIR R. PEEL said, that with respect to the last two points to which the hon. Gentleman had adverted, namely, a provision for the payment of schoolmasters of union workhouses, and for defraying, at the public charge, the expenses of the constabulary in Ireland, provision must be made for these in a Committee of Supply. It would be impossible to bring in a Bill until Votes had passed such a Committee. But at an early period after a Committee had sanctioned the proposal, a Bill would be introduced upon these two subjects. With regard to the other two points—the Drainage Bill, and the Bill for consolidating the Highway Trusts—he was sure the hon. Gentleman and the House must be aware of the extreme pressure upon the time of Her Majesty's Government for a long while past. There was no intentional delay on their part. The announcement of these measures led to a great number of suggestions and communications. The Government had applied all their leisure time in considering the details of these subjects, and he hoped by this day week they should be able to lay the Bills on the Table, at least he would make exertion to do so.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL—SECOND
READING.—FOURTH NIGHT.

On the Question, that the Order of the Day be read,

Mr. COBDEN said, he had to present a petition from a number of tenant farmers on the Netherby estate, in Cumberland. They expressed their conviction that the measures proposed by Government were

most important, and stated that they viewed them with the greatest satisfaction; though they could not refrain from adding that total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws would have met with their more hearty approbation. The noble Lord the Member for Lynn (Lord G. Bentinck) had recently presented a petition from the same quarter, signed by 3,000 farmers and others, against the removal of the existing protection; but he (Mr. Cobden) was glad to congratulate the right hon. Baronet opposite (Sir J. Graham) on the fact that all his tenants were not of the same way of thinking on this important question.

Order of the Day read.

SIR J. GRAHAM said: I can assure you, Sir, and the House, that I am very unwilling to prolong this protracted debate, which I believe the country at large sincerely desires to see terminated by some decision of this House, be that decision what it may; but having failed in the course of last evening to obtain that opportunity of addressing you which I was desirous of taking, I do not think it would be proper that this discussion should terminate without adverting to some of the observations and arguments which have been used in the course of this debate. I cannot pass over without notice the petition that has just been presented by the hon. Member for Stockport; and I can assure the House that I was not cognizant either of that petition, or of the petition which was presented on a former occasion by the noble Lord the Member for Lynn (Lord G. Bentinck), from a portion of my tenantry taking opposite views on the same question. It is needless for me to assure the House that, neither directly nor indirectly, by myself nor by any of my agents, have I interfered, in the slightest or the most remote degree, with the expression of the opinions of my tenantry on this subject. I have left them, on this as on other occasions, to exercise their own free judgments; feeling that they, as tenants, have as deep an interest in this matter as I have as a landlord, and that they, equally with myself, are entitled to pursue the course which is dictated by their honest convictions. Now, Sir, I shall proceed, with the permission of the House, at once to advert to the speech which closed the debate of last night: I allude to the speech of the noble Lord (Lord G. Bentinck) the Member for Lynn. I will first dispose of the peroration of that speech by one remark. It appeared to me that the

concluding part of the noble Lord's speech, stripped of all the metaphor which encumbered it, consisted almost entirely of that personal invective which, I must say, has marked the greater portion of the speeches which have been delivered on this side of the House against the measures which Her Majesty's Ministers propose. Now, Sir, having frankly avowed a great change in my own opinion on this subject, I will not be guilty of the impropriety—I might say, of the impertinence—of commenting with anything like undue severity upon the eager and tenacious maintenance, on the part of Gentlemen sitting on this side of the House, of the opinions which I sincerely and honestly entertained, in common with them, and which, till a very late period, I advocated with equal warmth and zeal. Neither, Sir, shall I say—for I could not say it with truth—that I am not deeply grieved by the loss of confidence and esteem, on the part of several hon. Members with whom I have acted for many years, and on whose support and friendship in trying circumstances I have often relied, and never relied in vain. I must add, however, Sir, that when I made up my mind, under a deep sense of public duty, to act in concert with my right hon. Friend at the head of the Government, and, upon considerations of public necessity, as it appeared to me, to present this measure to Parliament, as a servant of the Crown, I anticipated, and I foresaw with pain, all that has taken place on the present occasion with reference to the conduct of hon. Members on this side of the House. I counted the cost of the sacrifice which necessity and sense of duty compelled me to make. I was prepared, and I am prepared on public grounds, regardless of all taunts, regardless of all obloquy which may be heaped upon me, acting from a deep sense of what is due to the public, to set aside all personal considerations, and join in the advocacy of a measure which in my conscience I believe to be necessary for the public good. And although it would be affectation in me to dissemble the fact, that I am deeply moved by many things which have been said by Gentlemen in the course of the debate—by Gentlemen whose good opinion I highly value; yet, steadily, firmly, and fearlessly, I hope to be enabled to discharge that public duty which I have undertaken. I shall unflinchingly persevere in my course; and I am consoled by this single reflection, that, in my belief, the

time is not far distant when the country gentlemen of England will be satisfied that Her Majesty's Government has not betrayed their interests, and that their welfare and prosperity will hereafter be reconciled, in fact and in opinion, with the interests of the great body of the community, whose peace, whose contentment, whose more easy means of existence, it is the object of the Bill to promote; and I conscientiously believe that this measure, if it receive the sanction of Parliament, will not fail to accomplish this great end. Now, Sir, allow me to advert to some of the arguments which have been produced by the noble Lord the Member for Lynn, in opposition to this measure. I may be wrong, but certainly it does occur to me, that the arguments which the noble Lord adduced against this measure are precisely the arguments—the most cogent, the most convincing, the most unanswerable—which the opponents of the sliding scale, from time to time, have urged against its continuance. I will begin with the first position taken up by the noble Lord. He is very anxious to obtain some opinion from the Treasury bench; and, failing the statement of any such opinion from that quarter, he speculates himself as to what will be the price of wheat under a free trade in corn: and, with a view of forming an estimate of this price, he went, last night, through this very extraordinary process. He took the years 1835 and 1836, when the price of wheat in England was remarkably low; the price in 1836 being, I think, about 45s. a quarter, and the price in 1835 being 39s. a quarter; and then, in those circumstances, he takes the price of wheat on the Continent in these two years, and estimates from that by simply adding the amount of freight, and charges the price at which it might have been brought here, and sold at a profit. Now, observe, one great argument, against our restrictive Corn Law, is derived from its influence on the corn trade on the continent of Europe, arising from the unsteadiness of our demand; for, in varying times and varying seasons, the demand is most unequal and uncertain. It is quite clear, from long experience, that the price of wheat on the continent of Europe mainly depends on the demand for it in the British market. The price in 1835 and 1836 being unusually low in England, the accustomed effect was produced on the Continent. There was a glut in the foreign market owing to the absence of any Bri-

tish demand. Our supply was drawn from our own resources; the price was low; the complete suspension of the importation from abroad acted upon and reduced the price on the Continent; and, under those circumstances, and from those premises, the noble Lord draws the inference that the price at which wheat may be imported and sold in this country, is somewhere about 30s. per quarter. I leave it to the House to say whether it be a safe inference from these premises, that, *communibus annis*, 30s. per quarter would be the price of wheat in England. As it appears to me, the great argument in favour of a steady annual demand of wheat from the continent of Europe, in aid of the deficiency of our own supply, is this—that in the present circumstances of this country, from the large and increasing number of our population, with the difficulty of finding them a supply of food from home-growth annually increasing, the demand for corn from abroad will also annually increase; and the effect will be, not so much to lower the price of corn in this country, as to raise the price on the continent of Europe, thereby equalizing the demand here and abroad, and thus effecting this great object, giving security to the people of England, even in years of deficiency, against any sudden or extravagant rise of price, while, at the same time, the price of corn will be raised on the Continent. Our commercial rivals will thus have an extended trade with England, but will exchange their corn for those commodities which we can manufacture more cheaply than themselves. Thus, their competition with our manufactures will be discouraged, by the price of corn being raised in their markets, which is a great object with the manufacturing interest of this country to effect. We shall secure steadiness of price here, and we shall also take precautions for ensuring a moderate price. I repeat, in the absence of any British demand, in the years 1835 and 1836, the price of wheat in those years, so far from forming any groundwork by which to estimate the price that would prevail under a system of free importation, is only a proof of the evil resulting from the uncertainty of our demand in foreign markets, and of the effects of that uncertainty, which indisposed the northern Powers of the continent of Europe to any friendly commercial relations with this country. The noble Lord then proceeded to argue with reference to steadiness of price; and he produced a

table which again, I think, remarkably illustrates another great defect which the enemies of the sliding scale have alleged to be inherent in our present system of Corn Laws. The noble Lord demonstrated, by tables which he produced, more clearly than I have ever yet seen it shown, that the great fluctuations in the price of corn on the Continent do depend upon the demand from England for that commodity, which, under the sliding scale, is a varying demand. The noble Lord has produced a table of fluctuations, which shows most unequivocally, that exactly in proportion to the proximity of England, and to the demand at uncertain periods, from England, in certain parts of the Continent, for wheat, in exactly that proportion have been the fluctuations in price in those foreign ports. It would appear from this document that the fluctuations have been greatest at Antwerp, Amsterdam, Dantzic, Hamburgh, and Odessa, which are the ports whence we draw most of our required supplies; and, to complete the demonstration, the noble Lord dwelt upon the fact, that at Bordeaux the fluctuation had been the least; when it is quite notorious that with France we have scarcely any corn trade whatever, and consequently the effect of our irregular demand would not be felt there. Next to Bordeaux, it appeared the fluctuation has been least in New York; the reason being that the American corn trade has been exposed to peculiar difficulty with respect to this country; for the distance, added to the uncertainty of the market, has prevented our varying demands from much influencing that market. Now, the inference which I should say was to be drawn from this is, that the fluctuations in the foreign market are in a very great degree attributable to the uncertainty of the British demand. What is the consequence of this state of foreign trade? We convert our natural and best customers, not only into commercial rivals, but into commercial enemies. When they have an abundance of corn, if the harvest has been good here also, their markets are glutted; they have a superabundant supply, and can only obtain a very low price for their grain. The ruin of the grower is then the consequence. When there is a deficient supply abroad, should the supply have been short here also, we tender extravagantly high prices for their corn, and draw from them our supplies, at a great inconvenience to them, and at the risk of involving

them in want: the starving of the foreign consumer then ensues; and so they come to the conclusion that, upon the whole, considering the uncertainty of our corn trade, it is one on which they can place no reliance, and are much better without it. They accordingly meet us with hostile tariffs; they impose high duties upon our manufactures; and, hitherto, they have not only relinquished our corn trade in despair, as not only not conducive to their interests, but they have regarded it as inconsistent with their national safety and welfare. Then I repeat that the effect produced by our Corn Law legislation has tended to create fluctuations in the markets of the Continent; and this has appeared to me amongst the strongest reasons why the system should be altered. The noble Lord proceeded to comment upon what he called the evenness of price in England, since the alteration of the law in the year 1842. I have already stated to the House that that very evenness of price, in the present year, appears to me to be delusive. There certainly does appear, from the averages as now taken, an evenness of prices. But what is the fact? It is notorious that in no year, I believe not within the memory of the oldest farmer, has there been such an inequality in respect to the quality of the grain itself, as there is in the present year. I believe I am not exaggerating when I say, that the price of the wheat of last year varies from 48s. up to 72s. a quarter. But while this variation in the market prices exists, it is not shown in the averages by which the duty is regulated, the sliding scale being in this respect not to be relied upon; it leads, in fact, to false conclusions, and operates imperfectly in great national emergencies, and hence an alteration of that scale has become absolutely necessary. Then the noble Lord made another observation incidental to his main argument—that he was sorry to observe that the importations of foreign grain, when they did take place, were generally in foreign ships. Again, I say, this is one of the leading objections to the sliding scale. Owing to the unsteadiness of its operation, and the extreme uncertainty of what may be the amount of duty on the arrival of a cargo of wheat in our ports, our merchants do not choose year by year to engage in so hazardous a traffic. When the time of scarcity comes, however, not a moment is to be lost in despatching ships laden with grain; we cannot wait for our own ships to go and fetch it; and, owing to their em-

ployment in other trades, they are not to be had. There is no alternative but to take any ship that offers; and from the foreign ports foreign ships are necessarily sent. The noble Lord has observed, that the freight in British ships is higher than in foreign ships. This is a consequence of the uncertainty of the demand; and thus the importation takes place more usually in foreign than in British ships. And this circumstance to which the noble Lord referred, the encouragement to foreign, and discouragement to British shipping, is one among many reasons why the existing law has been condemned by its opponents. The noble Lord then proceeded to state that the farmers look with dread and consternation on this measure. The petition which has been this evening presented by the hon. Member for Stockport, has clearly shown that all farmers do not so regard it. But the hon. Member for Huntingdonshire (Mr. Fellowes) has said, that if these protective laws were removed, nearly all the land in the Bedford Level would go out of cultivation; and the hon. Gentleman who moved the Amendment (Mr. E. T. Yorke) said, as I understood, that the panic in Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely was so great, that drainage had been suspended, and that all agricultural improvement had suddenly been brought to an end. But, Sir, I must observe, that, to the best of my knowledge, the panic which the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire has adverted to, is much more confined within these walls than the hon. Members below the gangway are prepared to admit. All that I have seen and heard on the subject does not lead me to the belief that either landlords or tenants, who are not exposed to the contagious atmosphere of this House, partake of the panic which the hon. Gentlemen describe as being general. We were told, not long ago, by some hon. Gentleman on the opposite side of the House, of a landed proprietor in Somersetshire who had offered to release all his tenants from their existing engagements, should they be under any apprehension as to the effects of the alterations now proposed; and, if I remember right, out of forty-one tenants who had received the offer so to be released, only six had availed themselves of it. Now, I admit that such a refusal on the part of the tenants is no sure criterion that they are satisfied with their present condition; because tenants have at all times a large capital invested in their farms, and they cannot suddenly withdraw

from them without an immense sacrifice. Therefore, I admit, at once, that the refusal to accept such an offer, and to surrender their farms, is no conclusive evidence of their satisfaction with existing or contemplated arrangements. But, having made that admission, I must contend on the other hand, that where we see farmers entering into fresh contracts for large farms, and commencing great improvements, this is conclusive evidence that there is, on the part of the farmers entering into such contracts, no alarm whatever, as to the probable effects of the measure now under consideration. And as it is a matter of very great importance that the statements of the existence of apprehensions should be refuted, and that no such impression as that spoken of should continue on the public mind, the House, will, perhaps, permit me to lay before it some facts which have come within the range of my own observation. If I were called on to mention the farmers of Great Britain most distinguished for sagacity, skill, and intelligence, I should assuredly name, without hesitation, the farmers of the East Lothian of Scotland. Now, I have the permission of Lord Belhaven to read to the House a letter, dated February 25th, containing information on this subject. Lord Belhaven writes—

"I have been on a visit to Lord Wemyss for some days, and have had an opportunity of learning the opinions of the East Lothian and Berwickshire farmers to a considerable extent. Lord Wemyss' property in this county is, with one exception, the largest in it; and his factor, a clever sensible man, tells me that there is not a farm in this county or Berwickshire now to let that there are not more offers, and higher offers too, than he ever saw made for them, and by men of skill and capital. I asked how he accounted for this. His answer was, 'the corn question is now considered as settled; and the prospect held out of getting the land drained by the landlords, instead of having to lay out the money themselves as formerly, has created a general feeling of confidence among all intelligent farmers.' One gentleman of this county stated, that on a property in Berwickshire, on which he was trustee, he had five offers from men of known character as first-rate farmers, the amount of which was 16*l.* per cent. above the present rent. [This is since the introduction of this Bill by my right hon. Friend.] These are facts which are worth all the arguments one hears, coming, as they do, from the greatest corn-growing district in Scotland."

While reading, I heard somebody behind me refer to East Gloucester. I understand what was meant, and that it had relation to the much-desired dissolution of Parliament. I answer the insinuation by saying, there was an intention to bring

forward a protection candidate for East Lothian; but as soon as Mr. Charteris, the late Member for East Gloucester, declared himself a candidate, Sir G. Warrender withdrew his protection candidate; and, I believe, the return of Mr. Charteris for East Lothian, whenever the opportunity occurs, is beyond a doubt. But let me now advert shortly to the Isle of Ely, where the hon. Member informed us that land would be thrown out of cultivation, and where agricultural improvement was suspended. Again, I must be allowed to read a letter, and again I have full permission to use it for the purpose of this discussion. It runs thus:—

"I received a letter from the Duke of Bedford, a day or two ago, with the following postscript:— 'I received a letter this morning from my Cambridgeshire steward, to inform me that he had just let two farms for me to very intelligent men, father and son, with ample capital, at an increase of 126*l.* a year on their present rent. The agreement has been made since Peel's measure was introduced.' Such facts as these seem to me to be worth more than hosts of figures and columns of statistics."

The Duke of Bedford has given me leave to make use of this communication, which touches only the rental of land. But what has been the effect of the proposed repeal of the Corn Laws upon the value of the fee-simple? I know several land-surveyors of the highest eminence who were formerly much opposed to the alteration of the system, but who now have avowed their opinion in favour of the change, and who state that they are astonished by the effect produced by what is to be regarded as a virtual settlement of the question: they foresee an immediate augmentation of the value of land. I may notice the instance of an estate in Essex. The hon. Member for Totness is cognizant of the case—the land is within thirty miles of the metropolis—there is no residence upon it—and the rental is about 650*l.* a year. The owner, considering its proximity to London, the increasing traffic by railroads, and other circumstances, was advised to ask thirty-two years' purchase for it; and for three years he has been unable to obtain an offer approaching his price. What is the fact now? Within the last three weeks an offer has been made coming up to his valuation, and there is every reason to believe that a bargain will be struck. It is very easy for hon. Members opposed to the change of the law to speculate on the disadvantageous effect of it; but I say that a

single fact like this scatters to the winds all their gloomy conjectures. If it were true that land would be thrown out of cultivation, would any man out of Bedlam now set about enclosing land? Is the House aware of the working of the Enclosure Commission? By Act of Parliament, passed in the last Session, facilities to enclosure were given on easy terms, and at a small expense; and what have been the proceedings of the Commission within the last few months? What applications have been made for new enclosures? In September last, applications were sent in for the enclosure of 2,298 acres; in October, the number of acres sought to be enclosed was 4,588. This was at the time when strict protection was given to the land, and no alteration of the law was contemplated; but in November there was pregnant evidence of a disposition to propose a material alteration in the Corn Laws. Did that check the disposition for enclosure? The House shall see: the applications were in this proportion:—In October, 4,588 acres; in November, 7,147 acres; in December, 7,205 acres; in January, 5,600 acres; in February, 3,595 acres. [*Cheering.*] Nothing is so imprudent as cheering too soon; and I will show the hon. Members why. In one week of the present month there have been applications for the enclosure of 1,500 acres; and within the last fortnight, from the County of York alone, has been sent in an application for the enclosure of Bowes Moor, a common of inferior land, to no less an extent than 14,000 acres. Does not this show that the hon. Members cheered a little prematurely? Besides, there has been an application from Taunton Dean, Somerset, for the enclosure of 2,500 acres; so that, within the last fortnight, application has been made for the enclosure of no fewer than 16,500 acres. So much for land being thrown out of cultivation. But I must here be permitted to call the attention of the House to a Bill at this moment in progress: it is entitled, "A Bill for enclosing and reclaiming from the Sea certain tracts of land forming part of the great Estuary called the Wash." This is not a question of throwing land out of cultivation—not a question of enclosing waste land—but a question of applying the Dutch principle of scooping land out of the ocean, and, by the application of capital, making that land productive. Whose names are at the back of the Bill? First, I see that of

Lord George Bentinck; the second name is that of Viscount Jocelyn; and the third that of Mr. Bagge, the Member for West Norfolk. This Bill, be it remembered, has been brought in in the present year, since the plan of Government with respect to the change in the Corn Laws was well known. [Lord G. BENTINCK: It is a notice by a Member.] But here is the Bill itself; and the capital to be invested is no less than 500,000*l.*, with power to borrow 200,000*l.* Then, let us look at the list of subscribers. The first name is that of William George Frederick Scott Bentinck, commonly called Lord George Bentinck; and among the directors I find the names of Lord George Bentinck and Sir H. Folkes, mayor of Lynn for the time being, and others. Now, in a former Session, the rights of the Crown interposed an obstacle; and there was a negotiation between the parties on this point, but the issue was not satisfactory; but here, in this Bill, there is an admission of the rights of the Crown, and there is a clause charging the property of the company with the payment of one per cent. to the Crown upon all outlays and expenses, which is expressly stated to be intended as compensation for 30,000 or 40,000 acres. Now, the noble Lord will permit me to put a question to him which he has often put to my right hon. Friend. What is his estimate of the price of wheat under the new measure? I am well aware that the noble Lord is a great authority on the doctrine of chances; he is a perfect *De Moivre* in his way, and would no doubt make an excellent Chancellor of the Exchequer; and I want to know what is his calculation as to the future price of wheat, which induces him to take so prominent a part in this remarkable speculation? It is now, Sir, my painful duty to turn to a more serious part of the great question: the House will anticipate that I allude to the state of Ireland. I heard with great pain, and with surprise, the statement of the noble Lord (Lord G. Bentinck), that, in his opinion, which every day's experience confirmed, the potato famine in Ireland was a gross delusion; he said, I think, that a more gross delusion had never been palmed upon the country by any Government; and the noble Lord proceeded to argue that, because the average price of potatoes throughout Ireland was only 4*d.* a stone, there could not be any famine in that country. Now, I must have failed in my endeavour to show the

House what is the real state of Ireland, if it can believe that the average price of potatoes is any criterion of the state of destitution in that country. I may observe, in passing, that 4*d.* a stone in Ireland is nearly double the price of potatoes in ordinary circumstances at this period of the year; and that, when you take the difference between 2*d.* and 4*d.* a stone for potatoes, it is an increase in the price of an article of food of 100 per cent., a difference between plenty and want—I might almost say between life and death. The noble Lord also commented upon the fact of some large imports from Ireland. What is the inference from that? He seems to draw the inference that there is no destitution in Ireland. But it is a consequence of the high price of potatoes in England and Wales, where the failure of the potato crop is almost as great as in Ireland itself. High prices will attract the supplies to the richer from the poorer country, and it is quite sufficient to account for these imports that the growers desire to gain something from the small remnant of the crop whilst it remains good. But the view taken by the noble Lord may have been taken under an imperfect acquaintance with the condition of the country. He is, however, supported by the high authority of an Irish Member, the Member for the University of Dublin, and the Recorder of Dublin, recently returned from Ireland, and who has told the House that the accounts of the scarcity are the grossest exaggerations. [Mr. SHAW: Great exaggerations.] Well, great exaggerations. I hope the House will bear with me if I detain it by reading some extracts upon this point, which assumes an aspect of peculiar importance; for I must confess it was reading these details in October which convinced me then, as I am convinced now, that a discussion of the Corn Laws in the present Session of Parliament was inevitable. The right hon. Gentleman referred to the statements made by Mr. Lindley and Dr. Playfair, in November, consisting, in his opinion, of gross exaggerations. [Mr. SHAW: Great exaggeration.] Great exaggeration! I beg pardon of the right hon. Gentleman: the distinction between gross and great is rather a refinement; that report was made to the Government in November. That report, however, was not the circumstance which first alarmed me. I happened in October to be residing in Cumberland; and I received a letter from the Secretary of the Agricultural Society in Ireland, which includes a great number of the nobility and

gentry of the country. Now, that letter which I received from the Secretary of this society was dated October 23, and the House will see how far Dr. Playfair's report (which the right hon. Gentleman accuses of great exaggeration) corresponds with this letter:—

“Sir,—I beg leave to send you an extract from a Dublin morning paper, which will give you a correct account of the measures which the council of this society have adopted, respecting the prevailing disease in the potato crop. I beg leave also to state that when I issued a circular about a month since to the secretaries of one hundred and twenty local societies in connexion with the central one, I got several answers from persons stating that the disease was not then apparent in their immediate neighbourhood; but I have since received letters from most of them, stating that, upon digging the crops, they found the disease in almost every quarter, and I may safely say it appeared that there is not a county in Ireland that is not more or less affected by it. Since my return from the cattle show at Ballinasloe my office has been filled with specimens of the diseased potatoes from all quarters. The council of this society have directed their labour to two objects. First, to obtain the latest and most accurate information respecting the actual nature of the disease, in the different localities, through the machinery at our command, and to transmit the same from time to time, to the Irish Government at the Castle. Secondly, to institute the series of experiments within described, under the direction of Professor Kane, for the purpose of deciding upon saving the remnants of the crop, which now undoubtedly appears to be in the greatest jeopardy. The result of these experiments shall be carefully matured and communicated. I shall merely add, Sir, that the greatest panic appears to exist in all parts of the community, and those who know the country best are most puzzled how to act. One thing, however, I think, is certain—that enough has already transpired to justify the most prompt and energetic measures on the part of the public and the Government.”

An attempt has been made to throw upon Ministers the responsibility of a premature decision on the question; but the right hon. Member himself says that he was much alarmed in October. Was it not, then, the duty of Government on the 1st of November to act on the information they had received? They thought it their duty to act with promptitude, and to take into immediate consideration the laws regulating the supply of corn. But what I have read is not all. There came enclosed in the letter I have read a communication from a Colleague of the right hon. Member for Dublin University, Mr. Hamilton, who, on the 18th of October, thus addressed the Irish Agricultural Association in writing:—

“My dear Sir,—I am sorry it will not be in my power to attend the special meeting of the council this day. If, as I apprehend, the accounts from the different parts of Ireland concur in represent-

ing the failure in the potato crop as at all general, I think it would be advisable that the council should take means for bringing the subject before the Lord Lieutenant, in the hope that Government might take some steps to make provision against the imminent famine. I am aware that some time since inquiries were made through the constabulary by Government; but the character of the disease is so peculiar, and the mode of its operation so unexpected, that the apparent state of the crop of potatoes a fortnight ago affords very incorrect information as to its real state at the present moment. Probably the council could not do better than to instruct you to prepare a digest of the information which may have come in from the local societies, such as could be presented to Government; and if they were to meet again next week, say on Thursday next, they might then enter into communication with the Government on the subject. I name Thursday, for I think during the next few days, when the people are beginning to dig their crops, much accurate information will reach you; and it is most desirable that when we communicate with Government, the fullest and most accurate information should be afforded to them."

Such was the opinion in October, and I believe that a deputation waited upon the Lord Lieutenant; but the urgency of the case induced the Secretary to address me personally in the letter I have before read. I will now shortly state the more recent information that has reached Her Majesty's Government. The House will not fail to observe that the Recorder of Dublin maintains that a more gross exaggeration was never attempted to be palmed upon the country. Sinking the love of his country in his greater love of truth, this is the position taken by the right hon. and learned Gentleman. I will now read the account we have received from Waterford, dated the 19th of March, addressed by the Commissioner there to the Commissary in chief:—

"The price of potatoes is so high, and they are of so bad a quality, that they are no longer used in the poorhouse here, bread being substituted. Nearly all the potatoes on the quay come in coasting vessels from the county of Wexford, where it appears the soil is sandy, and where the mayor informs me the disease has done very little injury; but the price is 6d. per stone of 14 lbs., which is quite beyond the reach of the poor. I can bear witness to the fact, that in the immediate vicinity of this place a proportion of one-third to one-half—and in some cases the whole—has been found totally injured, fetid, and fit only for the dunghill."

This, I am sure, the House will agree with me in thinking forms a most important part of the documents which I have to lay before them; and I have now to call attention to that which discloses the most formidable portion of the whole evil—namely, the probability that not only the produce of the past year has failed, but the seed deposited in the ground already shows evidence of being tainted.

"Some of the crops of potatoes planted in January have been examined, and the seed has been found to have generally rotted. The ground will most probably be turned up in April, and sown with oats or barley."

I will now, with the permission of the House, direct attention to the condition of the people in the island of Achill. The information derived from that place is founded upon the statements made by an officer of the coast-guard, resident upon the island; his communication is dated the 1st of March, and these are the terms in which he writes:—

"Dear Sir James,—I regret to have to report to you a further unfavourable account of the potatoes in this district, in the southern part of which, I may say, they are, literally speaking, totally gone; the peasantry having now discovered, on opening their pits, the true state of them. I witnessed on Friday last that in many, instead of picking them by hand, they actually shovelled them out. On my return from Kule yesterday evening, I found a great number of persons (from fifty to sixty) waiting to complain to me of their misfortunes, which I assure you are great indeed; one person, with a family of six children, stated his crop to be now reduced to about six creels (8 cwt.)."

There are documents on the Table that in my apprehension speak volumes. I allude to the returns from the electoral districts of the Poor Law Unions. We have reports from 2,000 electoral districts belonging to Unions, and these being made up to the 15th of February, state that there is every prospect that the whole of the forthcoming crop will be found to be in a state of decomposition. The House will now, I trust, permit me to read this statement, which is very brief, but, in my opinion, extremely important:—

Proportion of the Potato Crop Lost.	Number of Electoral Divisions in which the annexed Pro- portions of the Potato Crop were returned lost, con- densed from Con- stabulary Reports of	
	Jan. 15, 1845.	Feb. 15, 1846.
Between 8-10ths and 9-10ths	3	2
" 7-10ths and 8-10ths	07	125
" 6-10ths and 7-10ths	124	184
" 5-10ths and 6-10ths	11	14
" 4-10ths and 5-10ths	640	673
" 3-10ths and 4-10ths	613	657
" 2-10ths and 3-10ths	283	252
" 1-10th and 2-10ths	156	135
Not exceeding 9-10ths	113	102
No loss	9	6
Not returned	3	2
Total number of Electoral Divisions	2,052	2,052

In the whole, then, of those electoral divisions, more than half of the entire crop has been absolutely destroyed. I am aware how often it is said that there has been no increase of this taint amongst the potatoes; and, therefore, I should wish, if the House will allow me, to advert to some fresh evidence of the fact from another part of Ireland. I find in a letter from Sligo, addressed by Colonel M'Arthur to the Commander in Chief of the Forces in Ireland, which bears date the 14th of March, that the scarcity in that neighbourhood is of the most alarming character. From the statements of Colonel M'Arthur it appears, that the supply of food for the people in the neighbourhood of Sligo, is, at the present time, one-third less than it was at the corresponding period of last year; and that the prices of potatoes in the towns between Sligo and Dublin had risen 25 to 50 per cent., clearly establishing the fact of a deficiency. Accounts from Carriek-on-Suir, dated the 1st of March, gave the same melancholy feature of the existing state of things; and prove, beyond a doubt, that the progress of the rot is in every point of view most alarming. In one case there were 1,500 barrels of potatoes in pits; and, with the exception of two barrels, they were all putrid. I now propose to read an extract or two from the report of a meeting which took place in the county of Cork, when Lord Mountcashel presided. At that meeting the following resolution was adopted:—

"Resolved—That the local committees be requested to use their utmost diligence in ascertaining the funds necessary to support the people in their respective districts, until the 10th day of August next; and that the landlords be called upon to meet the exigencies of the case by subscribing a rational proportion, according to the value of their respective estates, based on the Poor Law valuation."

What follows is a quotation of a letter from Lord Mountcashel's agent, addressed to Lord Mountcashel, and dated from Fermoy, 16th March, and read at the same meeting:—

"My Lord,—I have examined the potatoes in the pits, and find them getting worse every day since the beginning of the month—I may say, nearly one-third gone. On examining those in the lofts, I find them worse than those in the pits—nearly one-half gone. I am sorry to say, on examining four different kinds, planted on the 13th of February and following days, they are getting into a state of decay faster than the above; even those shooting out are puny and stunted. If all now growing come to maturity, they will not be above one-third of a crop.

D. M. KISSICK."

At this meeting the following observations were made:—

"This was very serious indeed, and brought them to the consideration of the future. What was to become of them next year? It would appear that the potatoes were gone. If they planted rotten potatoes, they would not grow; and the consequence would be, the total failure next year of what the Irish people depended on for food."

I do not wish to prolong the present discussion by referring to any more documents; but I have before me one statement from Mountmellick, which I cannot refrain from reading to the House. It consists of resolutions agreed to at a meeting of the board of guardians, held on Friday, March 20:—

"That at the meeting of the board this day, a number of decent poor married women made application for relief; their families amounted to the number of eighty human beings, without food or sufficient employment; those poor people have houses or cabins, and if their whole families were to accept of temporary relief in the workhouse, their residences and furniture would be lost to them. Feeling the pressure of want and destitution now so general in this populous town and neighbourhood, we feel it our bounden duty to bring this matter under the consideration of the Executive Government and the Poor Law Commissioners, in order that some mode may be devised or pointed out whereby relief may be given by a supply of cheap food, either gratuitously, or at a cheap rate, to meet the present exigency. The poor persons who applied to the board this day, form but a very small portion of those who we know are now in great distress, and actually subsisting on food made from the wash of a starch yard; only suited for, and considered indifferent food for pigs."

[Mr. SHAW: What has that to do with potatoes?] The right hon. Gentleman asks what has this to do with the potato disease? I think it has very much to do with the destitution of a starving people. Does the right hon. Gentleman really mean, after hearing these statements, that it is a great exaggeration to say that the potatoes are diseased and deficient in many localities in Ireland, when we have such representations as this, that people are actually existing on food taken from the wash of a starch yard? Now, let us try it by another test. The Lord Lieutenant, on Monday last, received a deputation from the city of Limerick. That is a wealthy place—no small district—but a city containing an immense number of inhabitants; and what is the representation of that deputation? It consisted of the Mayor of Limerick, the Dean of Limerick, Sir David Roche, and Mr. Marshall, and they said that the destitution of Limerick and the neighbourhood, arising

from the diseased and deficient crop of potatoes, was extreme; and that statement was confirmed by Lord Clare, who resided in the neighbourhood of Limerick. They said that the destitution was so great, that they found it necessary to raise a subscription, which then amounted to 500*l.*, to rescue the poor inhabitants from actual starvation; and they earnestly represented to the Lord Lieutenant, that unless His Excellency would consent to contribute towards the alleviation of that distress, the most fatal consequences were to be apprehended. Now mark, this has occurred in the month of March. Spring has not far advanced; but already we see a deputation from the city of Limerick coming before the Lord Lieutenant, and imploring for a dole out of the public purse to save the people from absolute starvation; and yet the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the University of Dublin stands up and gravely assures us that the exaggeration has been very great. This the right hon. Gentleman asserted; but he at the same time stated, what I think ought to be borne in mind, that at this time of the year fever, dysentery, and in some cases famine itself, was always to be found in Ireland to some extent. That, I grieve to say, is true; and so true, that the right hon. Gentleman acts on his deep convictions on this subject, although he says that the potato disease is an exaggeration, yet his compassion for his countrymen is so warm, that still, while he denies the extent of the distress, yet he takes credit to himself for willingness to support any measures which the Government might have brought forward with a view of meeting the temporary emergency; and more especially a grant or loan, taken from the British public, to the extent of 400,000*l.* Now, Sir, some hon. Members have declared themselves unable to perceive the connexion which exists between the case of Ireland, as it at present stands, and the proposed alteration of the Corn Laws; but, Sir, if the statement of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the University of Dublin be correct, with respect to the condition of the Irish people—if it be true that year after year they are in such a frightful position on account of fever, dysentery, and dearth, as to render their present case by no means extraordinary—it must be necessary to meet their exigencies by grants of money from the public purse, either by way of loan or of absolute gift; and, for my part, I cannot consent to call

upon the people of England, who themselves suffer from this same calamity of the potato disease, though not perhaps in so aggravated a form—I cannot, I say, consent to call upon them to make grants from the public Exchequer in aid of Ireland, and, at the same time, insist that there shall remain on the statute-book a law the operation of which is to enhance the price of their daily bread. Authorities have been quoted by protectionist Members in favour of their own particular doctrines; but I am much mistaken if authorities equally respectable may not be quoted in favour of ours. Adam Smith, a great authority upon these questions, and one who appears to be regarded with singular favour by hon. Gentlemen below the gangway, is most decidedly favourable to free trade in corn; and is of opinion, that it is the surest preventive of famine, and the only palliative of dearth. The same doctrine has received the sanction of Burke. Admirable and beautiful as are all the works which emanated from that great man, there is none which appears to me better entitled to respect and admiration than his “Thoughts on Scarcity.” Hon. Gentlemen opposite are fond of quoting extracts from it; but there is one passage which they have neglected to quote; and yet it appears to me of all others the most deserving of notice, and to my mind, at least, is quite conclusive as to what is the duty of the Legislature when cases of national distress arise, such as we have now to deal with. I do not remember his precise words, and, therefore, will not be responsible for the verbal accuracy of the quotation; but I believe it runs somewhat thus:—

“In my opinion there is no way of preventing this evil, which goes to the destruction of all our agriculture, and of that part of our internal commerce which touches our agriculture the most nearly, as well as the safety and very being of Government, but manfully to resist the very first idea, speculative or practical, that it is within the competence of Government, taken as Government, or even of the rich, as rich, to supply to the poor those necessaries which it has pleased Divine Providence for a while to withhold from them. We, the people, ought to be made sensible that it is not in breaking the laws of commerce, which are the laws of nature, and consequently the laws of God, that we are to place our hope of softening the Divine displeasure to remove any calamity under which we suffer, or which hangs over us.”

These appear to me to be the words of wisdom; the principle they lay down appears to me worthy of the gravest consi-

deration; and I hesitate not to admit that it has been the moving principle with me, to support and advocate the measures now under discussion. But the right hon. Gentleman charges us with having betrayed our party; and declares that we cannot be excused nor pardoned for the course which we have pursued. Sir, I have already frankly declared that I cannot consent to cast censure on hon. Gentlemen who still adhere unequivocally to opinions which I once shared myself; but I have often expressed a hope, and I now again, with unaffected sincerity express it, that the day will soon come when those Gentlemen will see that we have not betrayed them, and admit that the course which we have taken is that which was best calculated to promote their interests, and those of the country at large. The right hon. Gentleman the Recorder for Dublin has cast our horoscope. He says that we are a falling Government, and sitting behind us, he acts upon that principle, for he kicks us because he thinks we are falling. He alludes to the possibility of a protectionist Government. If such a Government should ever be formed, I—notwithstanding what has fallen from the right hon. Gentleman—am free to confess that I hope he may succeed in obtaining from that Government a satisfactory settlement of the Recorder-ship of Dublin. I trust, Sir, that he may be enabled to procure from a protectionist Government a retiring allowance such as he desired, but such as I regret it was not in my power to advocate. The right hon. Gentleman declares that he never looked for political power, nor sought for the enjoyment of Parliamentary office; but yet, if a protection Government were formed, the vision of the Irish Secretaryship might again flit across his fancy; and, should he obtain that office, I hope that under the benign influence of his administration, the people of Ireland may enjoy all the advantages of which their condition is susceptible. At all events, whether now, or at whatever time the learned Recorder may give utterance to these reproaches, I cannot fail to appreciate the feelings which actuate him; and knowing those feelings, his censure sits light upon me. I infinitely prefer his open hostility to his smouldering resentment. Then, Sir, the hon. Gentleman the Member for the University of Oxford, stated his opinion, that this measure was inconsistent with the interests of the titheowners. Nothing could be more accurate, than the state-

ment which the hon. Member made that, under the Commutation Act, tithe is an invariable quantity, though the price is variable. In my opinion, the very accuracy of the statement disposes of the question so far as the titheowners are concerned. Under the Tithe Commutation Act an invariable quantity is secured, whatever may be the change of cultivation: the only variation is in the price. Now observe, before the Tithe Commutation Act, the titheowner was not only exposed to a variation of price—because, if he took his tithe in kind, he was liable to the variation of price—but also to a great variation in quantity; whilst under the Tithe Commutation Act, he is free from that variation in quantity to which he was before exposed, and he is liable only to that variation of price from which he was not before exempt. That is my answer to the objection of the hon. Gentleman the Member for the University of Oxford. But let us consider the ease of the tithepayers; and if there be any hardship in the case, the tithepayers are more affected than the titheowners. Unlike the tithe receivers, the tithepayers have to pay a fixed quantity, and even if the land be thrown out of cultivation, the quantity they have to pay will not be reduced, though the variation in price will be provided for, since there is every year an adjustment of price, based on the averages of the last seven years. I am free to confess, Sir, that my answer to the tithepayers is not so complete as my answer to the titheowners; but upon the whole I believe that they will both find that they have had an equitable settlement; and, it must be remembered that, on the whole, the Tithe Commutation Act is greatly in favour of the landed proprietors. Till the passing of that Act, whatever was the increase in the quantity of produce, the titheowner partook of it; the titheowner was in fact coparcener with the owner of the soil, and partook of the increased produce without sharing in the outlay necessary to make that increase. Prospectively under the Tithe Commutation Act that coparcenary is dissolved, and the landowners now enjoy exclusively the permanent advantages arising from the outlay of capital, and from the increased quantity of produce. Upon the whole, then, I think that the arrangement may be regarded as equitable to all parties, and I do not see why the titheowners should offer any obstacles to the progress of this measure. But the hon. Member for Oxford

put the case as a dilemma; if the prices should not fall, he asked, what is the object of this Bill? and if the price falls, where is the equity of this measure? Now the Corn Laws are always open to another dilemma: the present Corn Laws either enhance the price of one of the first articles of necessity, or they do not so affect it. If they do not affect prices, I wish to know why is there all this resistance to any change? It cannot be denied that they turn our foreign customers into rivals—that they cramp our foreign trade—that they disorganize the home market—that they cause internal dissension—that they set class against class—that they cause hearthburnings amongst a large portion of the community; and that they produce, I may almost say, an endless interruption of domestic peace. If they do not affect prices, wherein consists the injury done to the landowners? But if they do cause a permanent enhancement of price, then the interests of the consumers and of the receivers of wages are justly arrayed against them; and they may say—

“Why do you make us pay a larger price than we ought, and than we should otherwise pay for our daily bread, whilst at the same time you diminish our means of purchasing food?”

I will now refer to the damage likely to arise to agriculture; and I must here say that the prosperity of the home trade has been almost invariably concurrent with the improvement of the land, with the prosperity of agriculture; and, speaking generally, with the reduced price of food; and upon this point I cannot resist quoting to the House a short passage from a work on this subject, in which the writer states the argument upon this point so tersely and so ably, that I cannot hope to present it in so effective and so clear a manner. In the neighbourhood of the manufacturing towns, the importation from distant places has received a great and a progressive increase. Manchester and Liverpool now draw their supplies of agricultural produce from Ireland, from Scotland, and from the northern counties of England; and, simultaneously with that increased importation of produce from a distance, there is a higher price for farm produce in the neighbourhood of the towns; and so far from its being a consequence that the value of land in the neighbourhood of the towns has fallen, the very reverse is the fact. The case, however, is so ably put in the work of Mr. Wilson on the influence of the Corn Laws, that, with

the permission of the House, I will read what he says:—

“Of late years the facilities of steam navigation have enabled the producers in Ireland, Cumberland, and elsewhere, to send the fruits of their industry to cheaper and easier rates to Liverpool, Manchester, &c.; but, while we find that, in the former places, these facilities have tended to improve the value of property, and the general condition of the producer, yet they have in no way tended to reduce the value of property or the condition of the producer in the neighbourhoods of the latter places. Without these additional supplies, the consuming ability of the large towns would have been abridged to a smaller quantity of food; but, with such additional supplies of such articles as can be best brought from a distance at a cheaper rate, a larger ability to consume other articles, which are not so easily transported, is obtained by the community, in the production of which the immediate producers find an occupation as profitable as before, and thus the whole community of producers and consumers is equally benefited.”

And here he gives an application to which I would call the especial attention of hon. Members:—

“There is no more reason why the consumer in Great Britain should not be benefited by the producer of the continent without injury to our own property, than that the consumers in Liverpool and Manchester should be benefited by the producers in Ireland and Cumberland, as has been shown, without lowering the value of land in the immediate neighbourhood.”

This argument, I confess, appears to me to be conclusive and unanswerable. Now, Sir, there is only one other point to which I am anxious, with the permission of the House, to direct the special attention of hon. Members: it is the important question of the bearing of the price of corn on the rate of wages. I have stated on former occasions to this House my deep and firm conviction with regard to the manufacturing population—and there has been strong evidence to confirm my views—that so far from high prices producing high wages, the very converse is true, and that low prices produce high wages, and high prices produce low wages. I allude to the evidence given before the Handloom Commissioners; and I can refer to evidence given in Scotland, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, by the handloom weavers in the county of Warwick, and last of all by the silk weavers. The first evidence to which I refer is that of a Scotch witness, taken by Mr. Symonds, the Assistant Commissioner, in the south of Scotland, for inquiring into the condition of the handloom weaver; and on the result of that evidence Mr. Symonds reports, that the only measure desired by the weavers, and thought de-

sirable by the manufacturers, was the repeal of the Corn Laws. They considered the continuance of that tax, by increasing the price of food, and diminishing the amount of employment, as grievous and impolitic. Next let me refer you to the evidence of two handloom weavers themselves, given to Mr. Chapman, the Assistant Commissioner in the West Riding. Charles Fletcher was asked, "Have you considered the causes of your distress?" and his reply was, he had, and that he attributed the decline, in a considerable degree, to the operation of the Corn Laws. He was then asked, "In what way did you come to that opinion?" and his reply was, that they prevented the exchange of our commodities with other countries, and that their repeal would open the woollen trade to the whole continent. He was further asked, "Is there any other way in which the weavers are affected?" and he replied he thought the weavers were peculiarly affected, for the less income they had, the less they could spend on bread. Wheat was then 3s. 4d. a stone. A man with a family required two stone, or two stone and a half. Now, he had known it occasionally as low as 2s. a stone; and it ought not to be so high. James Carmack declared that there was more than one cause; but the chief he should say was the Corn Laws, for the duty on foreign grain tended to cramp commerce, and it also caused them to eat bread dearer than they ought to do, and than the people of other countries do, and obliged them to consume more of their small earnings in buying bread, so as to leave little for the purchase of anything else. And this, Sir, has been the effect on the home market; high prices have destroyed the demand for many manufactured articles. This has been followed by the mills working short time, by the suspension of labour, and by universal distress throughout the manufacturing districts. The hon. Member for Rutlandshire last evening felt the force of this so cogently, that he proposed, as an act of justice to the working classes, that there should be, and he declared there ought to be, a sliding scale of wages as a relief from the sliding scale in the Corn Laws; and not only that there should be fixed a minimum rate of wages, but that the rate should be adapted to the high price of corn: such was the proposition gravely made by the hon. Member for Rutlandshire, who thought it unjust to enhance the price of corn without establishing a scale of wages. I am

ashamed to trouble the House any longer, otherwise I could cite much more evidence from the Report of the Handloom Weavers' Commission, of workmen in various trades, whose evidence is given in their own words; but I am certain that I do not misrepresent the character of that evidence, when I say that the manufacturing population generally look upon the Corn Laws as enhancing the price of food, and at the same time diminishing the rate of wages. And now, Sir, I come to the consideration which I own operates most powerfully on my judgment. I cannot overlook the fact, that the Government of this country is, in practice, vested mainly in the landowners. The other House of Parliament is composed almost exclusively of landowners; and there is in this House a great preponderance of the landed interest. A Government so based and so conducted cannot long maintain its influence in opposition to the great body of public opinion; such a Government, to be safe, must make it evident to all that its rule is impartial legislation; and now, when we consider the concentration, the union, the intelligence, the growing numbers, and the increasing proportion of the manufacturing population, who have, if not an universal, a very general opinion deeply seated in their mind, that the Corn Laws do enhance the price of bread, and do at the same time lower wages—that they make the manufacturing workmen pay more and receive less—if you persist in maintaining such laws, you may depend upon it that the population will not place confidence in your justice, or in the impartiality of your legislation. The people, upon this point of their daily food, will not at all times listen even to reason; much less will they be cajoled by fallacies; and I am satisfied, in my own judgment, that they are not wrong in their opinion. They are right in their opinion, that with the manufacturing population of this country high prices are concurrent with low wages; and they are placed in a most unfair position when the price of bread is artificially enhanced, and at the same time the means of obtaining it are decreased. If, Sir, time would permit, I could give you conclusive evidence, which I have before me, that this opinion is no longer confined to the manufacturing population. I could show that the agricultural population are beginning to be of the same opinion. I could produce evidence that there is a diminution of crime when prices fall, and that there is an increase of crime when

prices rise. I can show that distemper and mortality also increase in proportion to the rise in the price of food, and that they decrease as the price of food diminishes. It has been proved to you, that, although wages in some of the agricultural districts may occasionally rise to a certain extent with the rise of corn, yet that they never rise commensurately, nor in the same ratio. I have shown the effect of the Corn Laws on the manufacturing population—I have shown the spreading distrust and aversion which are springing up against them amongst the agricultural population; and looking at the question dispassionately, I am bound to say that I cannot believe that the conclusions drawn by the manufacturing population are not sound and true. On the contrary, I believe them to be most accurate. I see that those protective laws will be dangerous to the rights of property, unless you supply a practical remedy in time—dangerous to the public peace and to the well-being of this country; and this being my conviction, I can, with a safe conscience and unhesitating judgment, give my unqualified support to this Bill. It is unnecessary for me to say, that with regard to domestic peace, no time should be lost in passing this measure; and with respect to our foreign relations, I will only say that I consider its enactment highly desirable and decidedly politic. Nations advantageously trading with each other are bound in heavy recognizances to keep the peace. The current of trade, once suffered to run free, deepens its channels and extends its ramifications. Its vivifying power is felt by every member of the community; and whatever may be the dispositions of Government towards war, the whole body of the people, deriving their daily comforts from uninterrupted trade, will be loud in their demands for peace; and be assured, Sir, that the surest foundations for the peace of the world will be found to be, commerce extending its benefits to the great masses of the human race. The hon. Gentleman who moved the Amendment concluded with a quotation from a modern poet. My quotation shall not be from a modern poet. There are, in Pope's poem of "Windsor Forest," a few lines which appear to me so applicable to the extension of free trade, that if the House will so far indulge me, I shall take the liberty of quoting them. Looking forward to the happy day when London will have become a free port, he thus apostrophises the noble river which opens to this

great metropolis the commerce of the world:—

"The time shall come when, free as seas or wind,
Unbounded Thames shall flow for all mankind,
Whole nations enter with each swelling tide,
And seas but join the regions they divide;
Earth's distant ends our glory shall behold,
And the new world launch forth to seek the old."

That is the real description of the happy consequences to be expected from the measure we are now discussing. May the vision be realized!—as assuredly it will be at no distant period—if with me you give your assent to the second reading of this Bill.

MR. STUART (Newark): Sir, I feel anxious to make a few observations on the subject of this debate. It seems to me that through the whole course of the discussion, which has lasted for many nights, great temper and forbearance has on the whole been shown, and especially by those hon. Members among whom I sit. I think almost every Gentleman who has spoken in condemnation of the new measure of the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government has attributed to him and to his Colleagues the purest and best motives for the opinions which they now profess. I think, Sir, that whatever is said in Parliament by persons in authority is entitled to respectful attention. Feeling on my own part this respect, I am anxious to think as favourably as I can of any measure proposed by those who are entrusted by Her Majesty with the government of the country. And I have been the more disposed, Sir, to listen with respect to all that has been urged from the Treasury bench in this discussion, because the measure on which we are deliberating is proposed not by a young and inexperienced statesman, but by one of tried ability and experience, whose conduct in public affairs has stood the test of many years, and in whom, until very lately, we have long reposed our confidence. With these feelings, Sir, and after the forbearance which has been shown, it is with the deepest regret that I have heard the right hon. Baronet who has just sat down, attribute to a right hon. Gentleman near me—attribute to the right hon. the Recorder of Dublin (Mr. Shaw), the basest motives as actuating him in opposing the present measure. Sir, I think that the character of that right hon. Gentleman is sufficiently known in this House and in the country, to make us all feel that the imputation is unfounded, ungenerous, and

unjust; and it has been received by the House in such a way that I rather think the right hon. Baronet must now feel that he has made a mistake. What is said in such a spirit, and so wholly undeserved, can never find favour, I trust, in this House. Nothing shall tempt me, Sir, I trust, to depart from that respect which is due to the station and talents of the right hon. the Secretary for the Home Department; but when I am called upon to give my vote for or against this measure, I conceive I have a right to exercise my own judgment, and form my own opinion. When I am to consider whether this measure be a wise one or not, I must crave leave, not as asking any undue indulgence, and certainly not conceiving that any great weight is due to the opinion of so humble an individual as myself, still I must crave leave to express my firm and honest opinion, unbiassed by any other consideration. But we have heard, Sir, to my astonishment, from the right hon. Secretary for the Home Department, in the latter part of his speech, a matter brought forward for the first time, to influence our opinions on this question, which, as coming from him, I have heard with sorrow and alarm. I have read the report of a speech by the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden) not in this House, but in another place, in which he has said that the Government and the Constitution of this country were overridden by the landed interest. I do not mean to say that a person in the situation of that hon. Member may not express such an opinion; but I would ask whether it is just or correct? It is said that the Government has been oppressed and kept down by the landed interest, prevented by it from bringing forward the measures which they would otherwise have proposed as proper and wise. Such doctrines from that quarter may excite little surprise. But I ask, Sir, what are we to think when we hear from the Secretary of the Home Department an argument in favour of this measure which proceeds on this very ground?—when we hear a Member of the Cabinet tell us in this House, as a circumstance to influence our votes on this occasion, that we ought to pass this measure because the manufacturing interest is not sufficiently represented in this House—not because the measure is in itself wise and beneficial, but because the people have now begun to think that the landed interest has an undue preponderance in this House? [Sir J. GRA-

HAM: I did not say undue, I said a preponderating influence.] Very well. Then the argument is, that because the landed interest preponderates in the House, we ought to pass the measure without regard to the injury which it may occasion, and without considering whether it be a wise measure or not. Have things come to this pass, Sir, that we are to take for our guide not our own opinions, not the dictates of our own judgments, but that we must give way to what we are told is an opinion entertained by one class of the community, whose opinions and interests alone we are to attend to? This is addressed to us to coerce our opinions: right or wrong is to become a secondary consideration to what is called the growing opinion of the manufacturing classes. A doctrine more dangerous, more subversive of the independence of Parliament, more revolutionary, and more clearly tending to degrade the legislation of this country, I never heard. I believe, Sir, it is the opinion not only of every sound statesman, but of the great body of sensible and respectable men in this country, that this House fairly and justly represents all classes of the Commons in this kingdom. If not, what has become of the Reform Bill? If it does justly represent all classes of the people, can there be a more dangerous or degrading doctrine than that those who so represent all classes, should consider one class as less fully represented, and therefore abandon their opinions of what is for the benefit of all classes, in favour of the growing opinion of one particular class? It is my intention, Sir, to vote against this measure; and I shall endeavour, as shortly as I can, to state some of the reasons why I am determined to oppose it. The wide and general question of the wisdom and policy of the Corn Laws, is one into which I do not propose now to enter. It is a question which has been often enough discussed already, and on which this House has by large majorities again and again pronounced a decided opinion. It is a question the discussion of which has, I believe, occupied the mind of every well-educated Englishman; the arguments upon both sides of the question have been familiar to us from our early years; and the opinions of most men have been fixed and settled with regard to it. One great cause of difference of opinion on the subject, I believe to be the different views which persons take of the comparative importance of the landed interest, on the one hand,

and the manufacturing interest on the other. On this great and fundamental point, my own opinion, in common with that of those whom I believe to be the greatest and wisest, is, that while the importance of our manufactures and commerce must be admitted, all that relates to our agriculture is of still higher and greater importance. Sir, it is the rich and fertile fields of England which have been the very cause and source of our commerce and manufactures. But for our agricultural wealth, neither our cotton mills nor our manufactories would ever have existed. All our sound and practical statesmen are agreed in this—that the landed interest in this country, and the prosperity of its agriculture, is the basis of all our prosperity as a nation. Our commercial and manufacturing interest, great as it is, rests upon this basis, and is of a more fluctuating and transitory kind; and even if our cotton mills and manufactories should, in the vicissitude of things, perish and decay, our rich and fertile fields would remain the source of continued strength, and the means of renovation from the decay of more transitory wealth. I perceive an hon. Member on the opposite side of the House (Mr. Bouverie) smiles at this. He, perhaps, is of a different opinion. Perhaps he thinks that our cotton mills and trade will remain and flourish when the fertile fields of England are no more. At the hour when I am now speaking, the Corn Law of 1842 is the law of the land. It is a law founded on this wise and just principle, namely, that whereas our commerce and manufactures are protected by certain duties, so in a just and fair proportion should our agriculture be protected also. That is the system under which we are now acting, and under which our commerce and manufactures, as well as our agriculture, have flourished. The question now for our consideration, and on which we must give our votes is this—whether this just and successful system is to be abandoned—to be altogether thrown overboard as to one class—whether protection is to be extended to every other class except the landed interest—and as to it, the basis of the prosperity of all, is to be from this time forward withdrawn? I perfectly understand the arguments in favour of free trade. I admit their force as mere theoretical arguments. I deny their practicability or wisdom in the management of the affairs of this nation in the present state of the world. As applied to the measure before

us, I deny the justice of those arguments. If we are told—and that is what we are told—that protective duties are to be withdrawn from the produce of our land, and to be continued to the produce of our manufactories, I say that there is a glaring want of wisdom and want of justice in such a proceeding. And here I must address myself more directly to the reason for this sort of proceeding, which was put forward by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government. He said, that we must adopt this course as a matter of necessity; and he undertook to make out that a case of overwhelming necessity existed. But it is to be observed, that out of that great party, of which the right hon. Baronet was once the proud leader—a party as proud to be led by him as he was proud to be their leader—of this great party of more than 300 Members, only 112 supported him on this occasion, or countenanced the notion of the alleged necessity; and let it not be forgotten, that of those who supported him, more than one expressed an opinion that the effects of the measure would be most calamitous, and that it would be the ruin of thousands. Now, if the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, and the right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department, and those who vote with them on this measure, mean to support it on the ground of an overwhelming necessity, I beg leave to say, that this case of necessity has not been established at all. On the contrary, the right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department, although he did say something of the famine in Ireland, and the scarcity of potatoes, before he had done, put the argument on different grounds. But I beg leave to say, that the way to cure those calamities in Ireland, even if they existed in the fullest extent which has been alleged, is not by ruining the landed interest in England. How are the poor fever-stricken Irish to be cured, or the hungry to be fed, by telling them that protection to agriculture is to cease in the year 1849? Why this is a mockery. I say that if we are called upon to support this measure, on the notion that it is justified or required by the state of Ireland, the understanding of every reasonable man must reject the argument entirely. I call upon the Government to relieve those temporary evils with which Ireland is afflicted by some better and more speedy remedy. Such calamities are not to be met by extensive measures of this kind, which even some of those

hon. Members who feel bound to support them, are forced to admit will be most injurious. Then we come back to the question—is it wise or just to withdraw all protection from land, while it is extended to our manufactures? The right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department tells us that there is a growing opinion in the country that protection to land must cease, and therefore we must give way to that opinion. Now, I beg leave to deny that there is a growing opinion of this kind. Where is the evidence of it? The right hon. Baronet, as his proof of this growing opinion, reads to us the evidence of a handloom weaver, given before some Commissioners. Now, for my own part, I attribute very little weight to opinions obtained in this way; they are almost always the opinions of partisans—of men who are called to deliver such opinions because they are known to entertain them, and they are the sort of opinions which are wished for. I recollect, in my own case, there was a subject on which I happened to possess considerable authentic information. This being known, I was applied to by a Member of the Government, not the present Government, and requested to come to be examined before a Committee of this House. Before the examination, I had a conversation with the individual who had obtained the appointment of the Committee, and I found from him that he had a particular object in view—that my evidence would exactly tend to an opposite conclusion from that which he wished the Committee to come to. I need hardly say, that when this Gentleman ascertained what the result of my evidence would be, I was not examined at all. I confess that occurrence produced a pretty strong impression on my mind as to the degree of weight to be given to evidence before Committees of this House. But another sort of evidence has been resorted to in this discussion. The right hon. Baronet refers us to the reports of gentlemen employed by the Government to collect information. Now, information collected in that way is always sought for with a view to produce an impression of a particular kind; and it generally happens that persons so employed make it their business to ascertain the sort of view which it is wished the evidence collected by them should present. I am the more impressed with this from what I know happened to a friend of mine, now no more. He was a gentleman of great intelligence, and was employed by

the late Government to go through certain districts of England, to make inquiries and to report on a particular subject. He told me that not having much practice in such matters, he applied to a gentleman of great experience and long in office, to know how he should proceed in the preparation of his report. The advice he got was this: “The first thing I advise you to do, is to ascertain what sort of report it is wished by the Government that you should make.” It is, Sir, a very difficult thing indeed to obtain unbiassed evidence on any subject, but especially on a subject of this kind; and, without meaning any sort of disrespect to the functionaries employed by Government to collect information in Ireland, I must be allowed to receive their information with some distrust as to its perfect and impartial accuracy, especially when I find very opposite accounts from respectable and intelligent persons unconnected with the Government. But when the right hon. Baronet (Sir J. Graham) talks of the growth of opinion on this question, he should give us some better evidence, and let us know how he ascertains this growth of opinion. It is a very remarkable thing, that I have read a speech delivered sometime ago in January last, by the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden) so exactly like what has been said to-night by the right hon. Baronet (Sir J. Graham), that I must beg the House to allow me to read it. It is from a newspaper report of a speech of the hon. Member (Mr. Cobden), at Newcastle, I think—at one of those meetings which he describes himself as holding for lecturing and educating the people:—

“But the serious part of the matter is this: these very men have been the Government of the country; these very men and their class have been astride the Prime Ministers and most eminent statesmen who have governed the country for these fifty years. You read the speeches of Lord Southampton and Sir Charles Knightley; they are the very type of the men who have been governing you and your forefathers; and it is frightful to contemplate what the country has had to endure under the guidance of those men. Under their guidance did I say? No! the country has not exactly been guided by them; we have always had Prime Ministers who have contrived in some degree to evade them—men, for instance, who, like Sir R. Peel in his Canada Corn Bill, concocted some measures with a view to relieve a little the country from the misgovernment of these boobies; calculating, perhaps, as in that memorable instance, upon their ignorance of geography. When they saw these men resolved to starve us, they knew it was no good arguing with them on political economy; and they open a back-door through Canada, being well aware of

the fact that these men do not know the St. Lawrence from the Mississippi."

This was the lecture, and these were the facts delivered by the hon. Member to teach truth and justice to the manufacturing classes! But I beg the House to observe what he went on to say. It is in these words:—

"I know this for a fact. The idea originated in the Board of Trade with a man who chuckled to the day of his death in having originated an idea that succeeded in evading those squires. Such is the class of people who, in their blind ignorance, have ruled the destinies of this country; and how it is that the country has ever managed to survive such rule—how it is that this Anglo-Saxon people have put forth such mighty energies in spite of the incubus that sat on their industry, is one of the most marvellous things the historian has to deal with."

Now, I ask the House to observe how the general scope of this corresponds in a remarkable manner with the tone and language of the right hon. Baronet (Sir James Graham) this evening. If the right hon. Baronet had been himself one of the audience, he could not more effectually have imbibed the notions of the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden). But does the lecturing and noise of the Anti-Corn-Law League—noise communicated by factitious means, helped on by falsehood and fraud from day to day at public meetings, then published in the newspapers, and repeated in this House—constitute public opinion? The hon. Member for Stockport has talked in this House of the opinions of the lower classes employed in manufactories, whom he calls 'men in fustian jackets,' and proposes that meetings should be held according to what he describes as the custom of our Saxon ancestors, at which these men might express their opinions as those of the great body of the nation. But let me remind Her Majesty's Government, that the people who attend such meetings are not the whole even of that class of the population, nor even the better part or the more numerous part of that class. All the artisans in the country do not attend meetings on such subjects. The better part of our manufacturing population—the industrious mechanics and artisans, the more intelligent and sensible part of that body—employ their leisure hours in a more profitable manner. Those of them whose conduct and opinions are entitled to consideration, spend their time with their wives and families, or in pursuits very different from listening to the harangues of the hired orators of the Anti-Corn-Law League. The audience

who attend these orators and lecturers are of a very different character. From the earliest times—from the days of Jack Cade downwards to the present time—any mob orator may collect a large audience of idle and drunken mechanics and others, clad in fustian jackets, who will applaud him to the echo, and applaud him the more if he abuses the landed interest and men of station and authority in the country. Mobs may meet to applaud the speeches of those who flatter their prejudices and abuse their superiors; but what men of sense would listen to such trash and nonsense? What grieves, me, Sir, in this matter—and what I consider a great national calamity—is, that we are living under a Government who are imposed upon by these proceedings. It seems, Sir, that Her Majesty's present Ministers make no account of the opinions of quiet and respectable men—of the sober, honest, quiet, and industrious men who attend to their proper business, and spend their leisure hours in their houses, by their firesides, with their wives and families—who disregard the Anti-Corn-Law League—who disdain to receive their money, and will not attend their meetings. For my own part, having occasion to see a good deal of all classes of society, and to hold intercourse with persons high and low, and with many of those belonging to the manufacturing population, as well as with other classes—I know that the great body of them hold very different opinions; quiet and industrious men, who, like the agricultural population, do not make speeches or listen to speeches, or participate in those proceedings at public meetings of the Anti-Corn-Law League, which but for their effect on the present Government, I would call a nonsensical farce. I observe that the hon. Member for Stockport, in another of his speeches at these meetings, said he had been for years educating the people, and that it was years before he got his random audience to understand or adopt his views—views and doctrines which, I must be allowed to say, he delivers to them in such language as, if uttered in this House, would deprive him of all right to be heard in it. Why, the language which I have read to-night, in which he has called men of high rank and station and intelligence, boobies and ignorant men, is mild, compared with some of his expressions out of doors. I ask the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) whether he believes that the object of the Anti-Corn-Law League is to tell the plain truth, and to support it by

fair and honest argument? Can he believe it? Has he read these speeches? Because, if their object and practice were to assemble meetings merely to tell the truth, and to support the truth by fair arguments, their conduct, so far from being criminal and mischievous, as it is, would be praiseworthy and meritorious. We are told, Sir, by the Prime Minister, that he has changed his opinion on this great question. Be it so. It is no reproach to any man that he changes his opinion, if he change it for the better. It may be no reproach to his honesty if he change it. But let me beg the right hon. Baronet to consider that one inevitable consequence of the change must be, to diminish the weight and authority of the individual who announces that his opinion is changed. I could not but feel the force of what the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Roebuck) said on this subject a few nights ago. He says, he gives credit to the Prime Minister and the noble Lord opposite (Lord J. Russell) for now adopting the opinions which he thinks right; but he said, as to their being obliged to abandon their former opinions, "what a satire this is on their understandings!" I admit that there are sources of information open to the Members of a Government which are not accessible to persons not in office; and some credit must be given to those who have that advantage. But what I complain of is this—that up to this night we have heard no valid reason advanced to account for or justify their change of opinion on this question. This debate has gone on for many nights. We have had evidence and arguments of the most powerful kind advanced against the wisdom and expediency of the proposed measure. My noble Friend (Lord G. Bentinck), my hon. Friends near me (Mr. W. Miles and Mr. Bankes), and many other hon. Members on the same side, have brought forward facts and arguments of the utmost importance, and of cogency, to my mind, irresistible. How have they been met? We have had speeches, indeed, on the other side; but those of a description not only inadequate to the occasion, but far below the cold and ordinary arguments on former discussions of this question. Even my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. Villiers), who has very often argued this question with great ability, has on this occasion come far short of his former efforts. He was reduced even to address those who sit near me, by attributing to

us what none of us have said or thought. He has said to us, "You say you will allow the people of Ireland to starve." Why, I ask, who said so? Which of us has ever said anything of the kind? The right hon. Baronet (Sir J. Graham) has not, indeed, said this of us so directly, but he seemed to me to insinuate something of the same kind. [Mr. B. ESCOTT: Hear!] I suppose the hon. Member means to imply that there is some foundation for the charge. He will have an opportunity in the course of this evening of stating, if he can, who the individual Member is who has said that he would allow the people of Ireland to starve. What has been said, has been the very reverse. For the House cannot have forgotten, that when the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) drew a most powerful picture of the apprehended state of famine and disease in Ireland, as an argument in favour of the repeal of the Corn Laws, my hon. Friend (Mr. Hudson) rose, and with honest English feeling, which was responded to by the House, protested against having our feelings harrowed by those shocking pictures of poverty, famine, and disease, as a ground for repealing the Corn Laws, when the remedy for those impending calamities ought to be of a very different and much more immediate nature. The real truth is, that the Prime Minister is in a false position with reference to this question. A measure like that which he proposes, ought to come before the House with the weight and authority of the unanimous opinion of the Government in its favour. Can it be said that we have the measure before us with that authority? Can it be said that the present measure comes before the House with the same weight of authority in its favour as the measure of 1842? The truth is, that the present measure was occasioned by the change of opinion of the Prime Minister. In that change of opinion only two of his Colleagues concurred: the consequence was, that the Government was broken up. Then, what was the situation of Members on the other side of the House? The noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) no doubt thought he had practised a very successful political manœuvre when he published his letter, in November last, stating that he also had become a convert to the total and immediate repeal of the duty on foreign corn. The immediate effect, however, of that celebrated letter was, to make it impossible for the noble Lord to constitute a Government. I have no more doubt that the

noble Lord, when he published that letter, thought he had practised a successful political manœuvre, than I have—and I say it with great regret—that the proceedings of the present Government with regard to this measure savour of political manœuvre too. I therefore beg the House, and especially the 112 hon. Members on this side of the House who have hitherto supported this measure, to consider well in what position this measure stands. There is no disguise attempted by many of its supporters on the other side of the House. Their object is avowed to be, to cut down and destroy the ascendancy of the landed interest. [Captain LAYARD: No!] One hon. Member says, “No!” I have not a doubt that he is sincere. But has even he any doubt of the avowed object of others? Has not the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden) spoken plainly enough? Is there any sensible man that understands this question who doubts that it will be a severe injury to the agricultural interest? The noble Lord the Member for Suffolk (Lord Rendlesham) has told the House, that if this measure is adopted, one-half of his estate will be thrown out of cultivation. It is impossible to disregard such evidence. Nay, a noble Lord, the Member for Liverpool (Lord Sandon), who supports the Bill, has told the House that he has no doubt its effect will be to throw millions of acres out of cultivation, and to occasion great loss and misery to those engaged in agriculture. I ask the right hon. Baronet whether it is not the avowed object of the hon. Member for Stockport to cripple and put down the landed interest? [Mr. B. ESCOTT: No.] Surely the hon. Member for Stockport is best able to express his own views. Surely the hon. Member for Winchester has not attended to the speeches of the hon. Member for Stockport. What did that hon. Member mean when he talked of putting an end to the empire of the “boobies?” What did he mean by talking of the necessity of destroying the influence of that class which had bestridden the Government, and crippled their measures? His language was plain enough. Why did that hon. Member most untruly describe the speeches of Sir Charles Knightly and Lord Southampton as trash and nonsense, but for the same purpose? I have read these speeches, and found them very able, and sensible, and sound: they stated the truth, and abused nobody. It was plain that all these things were said by the prime supporters

of this measure, in order to persuade the House that the party opposed to the right hon. Baronet on this question, however high in station, and character, and talent, must be prevented from having any longer an influence in the Government of the country, and must, if possible, be crippled and put down. We are told, indeed, that the time is gone by when this House can be expected to legislate for a class. Why, what is this measure but legislating for one class, and against another class? The existing law, which we are called upon to alter, is a law for the benefit of all classes, and affords equal protection to all. If it protects the agriculturist, it protects the manufacturer also. But the proposed measure continues the protection to the manufacturer, but takes it entirely away from the agriculturist. I can readily conceive that we might have, with perfect wisdom and propriety, a measure proposed to us which should regulate and modify, on fair and just principles, the measure of protection to both classes. If the present measure had been—what it was promised it would be—a great and comprehensive measure, a fair adjustment of the whole principle of protection, I could understand the arguments in its favour; but the insuperable objection to it is this—that, instead of being a comprehensive measure, it is limited and partial. It is levelled entirely against one class. It takes away all protective duties from land, and continues them as to manufactures. Is this fair? Is this impartial? Is this comprehensive? If it be fair or just, its fairness and justice must be demonstrable; and yet we are hitherto without any evidence to support it. It was said indeed, that there is to be compensation to the landed interest. Let the House consider well how the matter stands as to this. Not only is the alleged compensation wholly inadequate, but it is comprised in some proposed measures to be the subject of separate enactments, which are for the present postponed. I could not help being struck with what was said on this subject the other night by the hon. Member for Finsbury (Mr. Duncombe). That hon. Member, while he supported the Corn Bill, and applauded the change of opinions on the Treasury bench, warned the House to beware lest the right hon. Baronet (Sir Robert Peel), who had changed his opinion of the Corn Laws, should change his opinion as to the compensation, especially as to the most important part of it, the proposed change in the law of settlement;

for he (Mr. Duncombe) told the House that the manufacturing interest was opposed to that change, and as the Corn Bill was occasioned by the influence of the manufacturers, that same influence might compel the right hon. Baronet to abandon the proposed changes in the law of settlement. There is something very significant in this warning. I do not know whether it strikes the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) in that way; but it seems to me it ought to make him feel how much his authority, and influence, and credit, are impaired by his unfortunate change of opinion on the great question before us. As to that change of opinion, his right hon. Colleague (Sir J. Graham) had indeed deprecated all appeals to *Hansard*, and to opinions expressed in former debates and former years; but I beg leave to tell that right hon. Baronet, that those volumes of *Hansard*, and those of his speeches of which it concerns his reputation that the record should be destroyed, are the volumes now in preparation, the records of such sentiments as those which he has delivered this night. Above all, would it be well for the right hon. Baronet's reputation as a statesman, that all record should perish of the doctrine which he has this night uttered, as to the state of representation in this House, and as to the necessity of being guided, not by our own honest opinions on the measure before us, but that we should give way to the opinion of the mobs congregated by the Anti-Corn-Law League. This doctrine, propounded to terrify the House, coming from a Member of the Government, seems to me awful indeed. But I must say, for myself, and for the honest and independent Members of this House, that if it has come to this, that there is a Government in this country which tells us we must submit to this sort of influence, such a Government ought not to exist for a single day. If we are to submit to this, Sir, and to be guided by such motives as these, our independence is gone, and this House would be reduced to the lowest state of corruption and degradation, and would be unfit for its duty as a great legislative assembly. It is the duty of a Government not to deliver such doctrines as these, but to protect the House against the influence of mobs, and to enable us to debate and discuss public measures on higher grounds than the adoption of the opinions expressed at mob meetings, or resolutions passed by assembled workmen in fustian jackets. The right hon. Baronet

(Sir J. Graham) referred to assemblies of unemployed workmen in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Such assemblies may be expected when the vicissitudes of trade unfortunately deprive workmen of employment. At present we may congratulate ourselves upon that prosperity, under the present system of protection, which has given employment to the labouring population. But, Sir, if a change of circumstances were to occur—if artisans, rendered discontented from the loss of their employment, should again congregate in Lincoln's Inn Fields or elsewhere, and threaten to overawe the House, it will become the business of the Government to prevent this House from the degradation of being so overawed; and the Government that is incapable of affording to our lives and properties, and to the freedom of our deliberations and debates on public affairs, that sort of protection, ought not to be entrusted with the management of the affairs of this great nation. Let me remind the House that this doctrine of being overawed by mobs was put in practice long ago. Nay, even the doctrine of casting *Hansard* overboard, which we have heard from the right hon. Baronet, proceeds on the same principle which Jack Cade preached to his followers, when he said, "Let all the records of Parliament be destroyed; and from henceforth let all law be received from my mouth." I have to apologize to the House for having said so much, and beg to express my deep sense of the kindness of the House for the indulgence and attention which I have received, not, I am aware, from any merit of my own, but from the kindness always shown in this House to a Member who speaks for the first time.

Mr. BOUVERIE said, that the incoherency of thought and argument which was perceptible in the speech of the hon. and learned Member who had just sat down was the usual indication of alarm, and should be therefore regarded as a proof that the alarm expressed by the hon. and learned Gentleman at the result of this measure was real. The hon. and learned Member had been rather indignant with him in one part of his speech, because he had ventured to smile at the remark which he had made, that the existence of manufactures and commerce depended upon the agriculture of the country, whereas if commerce and manufactures perished, the fertility of the soil would still continue. His smile was caused by the thought of what would become of the fertility of the

soil, if no manufactures or commerce existed. The argument of the hon. and learned Member reminded him of a sentiment in the poetry of the hon. Member's noble Colleague (Lord John Manners),—

"Let wealth and commerce, laws and learning, die;
But leave us still our old nobility."

He had really wondered whether the hon. and learned Member was not about repeating the quotation with a slight alteration, and saying—

"Let wealth and commerce, laws and learning, die;
But leave us still our old fertility."

Perhaps if the country had nothing but that fertility to depend on, the hon. and learned Gentleman would now be somewhat in the condition of one of those Piets that they read of in ancient history, when the fertile soil of England and Scotland existed, but when manufactures and commerce were unknown. The hon. and learned Gentleman seemed very slow of belief in facts which did not suit his particular views. He stated, to his (Mr. Bouverie's) astonishment, because he thought the matter had been admitted by all parties in that House, that the manufacturing classes were not in favour of a repeal of the protection laws. He wondered that when such was the hon. and learned Member's opinion, he had not had recourse to some great manufacturing constituency, instead of applying to a constituency in which the landed interest had a very unconstitutional, or, to say the least of it, a very unfair influence with regard to that House. The hon. and learned Gentleman appeared to him not to have at all touched upon the main question before the House, namely, whether the House of Commons, as representing the opinions of the people of this country, ought to vote for repealing these laws or not. There seemed to him to be a fallacy in the speeches of the hon. and learned Member, and of all the hon. Gentlemen opposite. There seemed to him to be a false assumption taken as the basis of their arguments, and which, if set in its true light, would destroy all their fine declamation. They assumed that the protection laws had been productive of that advantage, and prosperity, and gain to the landed interest which they were, no doubt, originally intended to produce. Of the evils which hon. Gentlemen portrayed with such force as likely to follow the passing of this Bill, there was hardly one which did not exist, and of which the pressure had not been felt under the very Corn Law which they now sought to maintain.

The dependence on foreign countries for a supply of corn, which hon. Gentlemen appeared so anxious to guard against, had been increasing year by year, or, at all events, in a number of years. Taking the nine years after 1815, when the first of these Corn Laws had been passed, he found the average quantity of foreign corn imported to be 800,000 quarters; whereas, in the next nine years the quantity had increased to 1,400,000 quarters. He had heard a curious argument on this part of the subject from an hon. Member one night during this debate. It was stated that the great object of the protective system was to keep this country altogether independent of foreign countries in time of war, and thus to give them a better security for peace; but the hon. Gentleman who used this argument seemed to forget that the great security against war existed in that free connexion between countries which the hon. Member opposed. In the next place, they had given a picture of misery to the farmers and to the agricultural labourers, for whom the sympathy of hon. Members seemed to have been deeply and warmly aroused. He would come to their case presently; but what he wished in the first place to maintain was, that these laws had not been productive of the prosperity to the landed interest which they were originally intended to produce; and, however hon. Gentlemen might talk, however they might mix up the question with sophistry and fallacy, they could never get over the real proposition which they had to meet—namely, that a law, the obvious tendency of which was to produce dearth in a necessary of life, could not be a just and a good law. That such a law was just, was the paradox which hon. Members had to maintain, and which he denied they ever could maintain. That this was a correct view of the question could not be denied, for dearth meant scarcity: it was, in fact, synonymous with dearth. Whenever these laws operated, they produced scarcity, and, as a necessary consequence, they produced additional pauperism and additional crime. The people believed that from time to time they took employment from the poor, and drove many of them to gaol and to the work-house. He did not care whether this belief was true or not; but such being their belief, he defied the protectionists to shake it. As wise statesmen, he asked whether they ought not to be influenced in their public conduct by such views, and

consent at once to change a law so injurious to the community. The people would certainly act upon their belief, whether it was false or otherwise; and, therefore, this being a national question, the true wisdom and policy would be to repeal the law, without reference to the interests, or supposed interests, of a particular class. He would, in the next place, consider the question whether the present law had produced prosperity to those classes for whose benefit it was intended. In considering this question he should put the landlords out of consideration, for he did not think, strictly speaking, they were entitled to be called the agricultural class. The labourer and the farmer constituted the agricultural classes. In the first place, what had been the operation of the law upon the farmer? He contended that in all its parts, so far from being perfect, it had been a complete experiment upon him. The law of 1815 gave him a complete monopoly. For the three years previous to 1821 he had also a monopoly. The result had been ruin, misery, and suffering, for the proof of which he referred hon. Gentlemen to the evidence taken before the Agricultural Committee of 1821; and he repeated that, so far as complete monopoly was concerned, an experiment had been made of giving the farmer the entire command of the home market, and it would not answer. The law was modified in 1828, and what had followed? Why, in a few years the very same result as before—ruin, misery, and suffering. He recollected reading the evidence of one farmer, who was asked where the farmers went to? To the workhouse, he replied. One more modification took place in 1842; and, so far as he could learn, this law had been inoperative to produce prosperity to the farmer. He contended, then, that as regarded the farmers, there was not the slightest pretence for maintaining protective Corn Laws as a means of producing prosperity; they had been ruined under their operation, and they could not be more ruined if they were removed altogether. He came now to the case of the labourer, in whose welfare the House could not but take the deepest interest. Most hon. Members were aware of the old Statutes for regulating labourers' wages, under which they were sent to gaol if they demanded more. Under the present law, in many districts of the country, the agricultural labourers, instead of being comfortable and prosperous, with plenty of the necessaries of life, had not enough of

them; whilst the luxuries of life were unknown to them altogether. The case of the protectionists, as regarded this law, ought to be that it had improved their condition, by increasing their physical comforts; but so far from having accomplished that, they were worse off than they were before. He had the means, to some extent, of proving this assertion. Arthur Young had recorded an immense body of facts, which he collected in the course of his tours through different parts of England in 1770; and he showed that at that time the money rate of wages in harvest time in his (Mr. Bouverie's) own county was 5s. 9d. a week. The wages at present were, for married men with families, 8s.; 7s. for ordinary men; and there were many single men who did not get more than 5s. 6d. and 6s. There was, however, a difference of 1s. 7d. per week, owing to the price of the necessaries of life at that period to be added to the rates of 1770, bread at that time being either $\frac{1}{2}$ d. or $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per lb., whilst now it was within the eighth of a penny of 2d. per lb. Beef, cheese, and butter, were double the price now that they were at that time. On these accounts he held that although the labourer's money wages had slightly increased, the agricultural labourer was worse off under a system of protection than when he had no protection. Neither farmers nor labourers had been benefited by the law, as he had shown; and as to the landowners, he did not believe they would suffer, in any degree, from the measure proposed by the right hon. Baronet. But even if their pecuniary interests suffered tenfold more than they were likely to suffer, he contended they ought to make the sacrifice. They had the strongest interest in the maintenance of good order; and if they consulted their best interests, they would urge the abandonment of the present law. It was true that a great part of the ordinary supporters of the right hon. Baronet were unable to appreciate his wisdom and statesmanlike views in proposing the measure now before the House; but the bulk of the community would do justice to his motives. He believed that many of these Gentlemen had taken the right hon. Baronet for their leader and given him their support from necessity. The power which he had was founded not upon their love, but upon their fears. But the right hon. Baronet saw the disgrace which would fall upon them if they longer persisted in this ungenerous struggle against the best interests and good sense

of the other classes. The right hon. Baronet wished to save them from that disgrace, and he offered to them the opportunity of a fair and honourable retreat. If they did not accept the offer, all the responsibility of the consequences would rest upon themselves.

THE MARQUESS OF WORCESTER quite agreed with one observation at least which had fallen from the hon. Member, and it was this: "That incoherence of argument evinced the presence of fear." That he could understand. The hon. Member had said that the exportation of bullion did not injure the country; and to prove this he had made a commencement at a certain year, as an approach to what would happen. Now, to his apprehension, to approach a point was not touching the point itself. He had himself been very near the fire, but he had not been burned. The hon. Member also found fault with the hon. Member for Newark, because he had said a famine in Ireland had been the cause of the measure now before the House, though he had stated this famine not to be a sufficient reason for the change. He did not see the hon. and learned Member for Liskeard in his place, or he would address himself to him; but others said, as well as that hon. Member, that those who sat on the protectionist side of the House, were not consistent, inasmuch as the Conservative Members said they did not believe in the distressed state of Ireland, and yet professed a readiness to do good to the country and adopt measures to remove its distress. But all the Conservatives wished to say was this, that if Ireland was more than usually distressed, they would be happy to join with the right hon. Baronet to relieve that distress. No proofs had been offered to the House that any distress, beyond the usual distress, existed in that country. It had also been said by the Member for Liskeard, that the protectionists had agitated for a dissolution. He had understood, however, that the constituency of Liskeard were not so enamoured of free trade as they had been, and therefore it was not wonderful that the prospect of a dissolution was distasteful to the hon. and learned Member. With respect to the measure of the right hon. Baronet, much injury must arise from it to the landed interest, because, on the shores of the Baltic, in Russia, and in the north of Germany, good land could be had at 12s. per acre; and labour, it was well known, was much cheaper than in this country. Could that

measure be good which reduced the farmer to a condition of suffering, and would drive the labourer to the workhouse? The right hon. Baronet should not have given way to the cry of the Anti-Corn-Law League. The right hon. Baronet did, perhaps, imagine, after the passing of the present measure—for it was said the measure was to pass—that the Anti-Corn-Law League would disperse. But that body would not only not disperse, but they would agitate for something else. Their next attempt might be against the Church of England; and every branch of the British Constitution might be in its turn attacked. The noble Marquess concluded by expressing his regret that the right hon. Baronet had given way before this first of a series of attacks upon the Constitution of Great Britain.

MR. GARDNER did not desire to waste the time of the House by the expression of merely his own sentiments; but his constituents naturally wished to hear his opinions upon these measures expressed in Parliament, inasmuch as he had, in his addresses to them, stated that he had offered himself to them on the ground of protection, and not of free trade. He did not think Her Majesty's Government had a sufficient case to justify their adoption of this measure. He was ready to admit that the potato failure was considerable, and much to be deplored; at the same time, it had appeared to him to have been much exaggerated by the panic which had been caused upon the subject; and his opinion was that this measure ought not to have been formed on such a basis. The right hon. Gentleman (Sir J. Graham) had endeavoured to convince the House of the necessity for the measure on the ground of the potato failure, in opposition to the able statements of the right hon. Gentleman the Recorder of Dublin; but when he found that the price of potatoes in Ireland was but about 4d. per stone, he must say he could not understand how famine could exist in that country, inasmuch as he could not conceive that 1s. a stone added to the price of potatoes, could produce a result which could amount to famine. He had himself, too, taken the trouble to ascertain what had been the average prices of potatoes in several parishes for the last six years, in comparison with the price for five previous years; and he found that, taking 404 parishes, there were in that number 107 towns in which the price in the present period was not more than it was in previous years; that there were 295 out of

404 in which the price had risen; that, out of these, the price in 11 towns had been $\frac{1}{2}d.$ per stone higher than the previous average price; in 59 towns $\frac{1}{2}d.$ per stone higher; in 10 towns $\frac{3}{4}d.$ higher; and in 57 towns $1d.$ per stone higher: leaving, altogether, 158 out of the 404 towns in which the price was $1d.$ per stone higher than the price of average years. Now, he must say, that this appeared to him to be a very strong argument against the alleged necessity for this measure on the ground of a potato famine. He could easily understand the force of the arguments of the right hon. Secretary for the Home Department, after the Returns made to him from the Mansion House Committee, of which Lord Cloncurry was Chairman, and particularly when that Report contained expressions of so fearful a character, which the experience of four months, however, had not borne out. It was asked that the ports of Ireland should be closed against the exportation of oats and oatmeal; and he confessed his surprise that the Government had not taken a course of that kind, following the example which had been so laudably set them by foreign Governments. He firmly believed that the measure before the House would have a most injurious effect upon agriculture in general; and that the corn of this country would, under its operation, be reduced to a lower average price than had been known for the last six or seven years. Having quoted from Adam Smith, and other writers on political economy who were in favour of free trade, to show that the result would be, that corn would become not only lower in price, but that it would remain stationary at such diminished value, the hon. Member contended, that if there was to be any compensation given to the landed interest for the losses they would sustain, the removal of the burdens on land ought to have been a question to be considered in conjunction with this measure. It was the high prices of former times which had brought a great portion of the lands of this country—and particularly such large districts as that of the Bedford Level—into cultivation; and viewing this measure in connexion with our colonial dependencies, he believed that the Colonies would also assert their right to have free trade; and that, whereas a sort of free trade did already exist between India and the States of Asia, they would, in a year or two, have a free trade between India and the States of Europe and America. If the colonial trade was of the

great value it had always been considered, he wished to know why they should do it this injury? During the five years ending with 1844, the value of exports from this country to her different Colonies was 13,500,000*l.*; and he thought it would be wise for them to consider the probable extent of their foreign trade before they exposed their Colonies to be injured to such an extent, as they naturally must be under this Bill. The hon. Member read several statements as to the great amount of the grain products of America, and particularly in regard to Indian corn, which he contended would come into extensive competition with our native agricultural produce, and concluded by expressing his intention to oppose the measure.

Mr. MILD MAY was desirous of stating why it was that he felt himself compelled to take a different course in regard to this question, from that at any time expected to be in reference to any measure emanating from the present Government benches. He was not in the House during the last discussion of this question, not because he then entertained a different opinion upon it from that which he now held, but because he could not think it right to oppose a Motion for going into Committee upon a Resolution introduced by Her Majesty's Government; and upon a subject which had formed a prominent paragraph in the Speech which had been delivered by Her Majesty to her Parliament. He had, therefore, abstained from voting on that occasion, because he was reluctant to be numbered among the supporters of a measure of which he disapproved. They had now, however, arrived at a further stage of the measure, and he could not refuse to take a straightforward part, whether in support of, or in opposition, to it. In the course he felt himself compelled to adopt, he could not but own that he felt the greatest reluctance in coming to a decision that would place him among the opponents of those with whom he had hitherto acted since he had been in Parliament, and to whom he was disposed to give every credit for the sincerity of their motives for the change of opinion which, upon this subject, they had adopted. But he was anxious to guard himself against its being supposed that he at all coincided in that laudatory view which the hon. and learned Member for Liskeard had taken of those changes of opinion; for the hon. Member seemed to think that the more people changed the

better they were—leaving the impression strong upon his mind, that, at an early period of his life, the hon. and learned Gentleman must have been a Conservative. However anxious he had been to agree in the views of Her Majesty's Government upon this question, and though he admitted that it was quite open to them to change their opinions, yet his own opinions were not formed in the same way as theirs: he could not turn so short; for, indeed, the shortness of the notice itself made it quite impossible for him to coincide with them in their views. They appeared to him, also, to have changed their opinions on too slight grounds; for it was really absurd to suppose that the real grounds for that change could be that which they had advanced in reference to Ireland. He could not refrain from thinking that the right hon. Baronet had attached more importance to the subject than the nature of it warranted; and he inclined to the opinion, that the right hon. Baronet had also seized upon certain foregone conclusions that had for some time occupied his mind, and had made the change in Ireland a ground for carrying out those important conclusions. He begged the House to look at the consequences that had resulted from the right hon. Baronet having connected two things not necessarily connected. He had deferred the contemplated relief to be administered to the people of Ireland from January to June; for Ireland could not feel the benefit of any law that might pass at the present Session until the month of June. But again, was it, he would inquire, necessary, if the right hon. Baronet had separated Indian corn from wheat, (for he had admitted that there had been no precedent in favour of admitting wheat before the Bill became law by passing both Houses of Parliament, and receiving the royal sanction, though he had admitted Indian corn,) that he should have made so extensive a change for the purpose of relieving any extent of famine in Ireland? He (Mr. Milnes) admitted, that between the conflicting accounts that had been laid before the House and the public, he was at a loss to form a correct opinion as to the grounds for such apprehensions, especially when he recollected, in the autumn of last year, that an attempt had been made, which attempt, however, had been unsuccessful, to make the people of England believe that famine would also visit them. This not succeeding, the scene had been transferred to Ireland. He deeply

felt the statement that had reached him respecting the distress in that country; and if distress existed to half the extent that had been represented, he thought that every Irishman in the House ought to be indignant with the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government for having so long postponed that relief which the circumstances of the country, if correctly stated, most imperatively demanded. If it were for the interests of the country generally, that so important a change should be effected, it became incumbent upon the right hon. Baronet to show not only the necessity but the safety of the measures he had proposed to the House for adoption. Now, with respect to the necessity, setting aside Ireland, which he never considered should have been mixed up with this question; and if he had not had a high opinion of those whom he had formerly supported, he would say that the apprehension of a famine in Ireland had been mixed up with the measure from an anxious attempt to make hon. Members surrender their judgment to their leader. He did not, however, believe that in the measures that had been lately proposed, Her Majesty's Ministers were actuated by any such feelings; but supposing a designing man to have changed his opinions, and on that account wished to force others to adopt his altered view of things, he could have conceived such an expedient as mixing up an alleged calamity with other matters for the purpose of obtaining a particular end. He begged, however, to be understood that he acquitted the Government from any such charge. With respect to the state of commercial affairs demanding the change, he believed that in the autumn of the last year, as far as his information upon the subject permitted him to give an opinion, all the interests of the country were in a state of prosperity. At the present moment it was true there might be some depression in the manufacturing districts; but he believed that stagnation might be assimilated to the coarser inhaling new breath previous to a fresh start, and not to a general depression. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that the right hon. Baronet (Sir Robert Peel) had stated the probability of some change of the kind taking place, which might have caused some temporary inconvenience, but which could not have led to any permanent disarrangement. Next came the question whether, if the right hon. Baronet thought the change necessary, he was well-ground-

ed in thinking that it could be adopted with safety? He was decidedly of opinion, looking at the ultimate effect, that the safety of adopting such a measure would be extremely questionable. He could not say that he was apprehensive of bad results this year, or probably the next; but from his own experience he regarded in a dubious point of view the assurance which the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had made—namely, that the conclusion he had arrived at was, that the effect upon agriculture would be very slight. The right hon. Baronet had, however, refrained from stating the extent of the effect which he considered the passing of this measure would have upon the agricultural interest. He had great respect for the right hon. Baronet; but he could not adopt his opinions upon this subject to the exclusion of his own. When he brought to mind the low price of corn at the Continental ports, and the facility for its cheap production in foreign countries, he could not imagine how Her Majesty's Ministers could satisfy themselves in bringing forward a measure having for its object the total annihilation of all protection to native produce. With such facts before him as the returns of the averages at foreign ports, he could not permit the assurance of the right hon. Baronet to lull his alarms. He feared the measure would pass, and he regretted it, for he apprehended that the greatest injury would ensue to this great community, but more particularly to that section of the agricultural body who cultivated poor lands, and who must be seriously injured by a diminution of prices. True it was that after a time poor lands might be converted into pasture land; but then it could only be by an arrangement with the landlord, because such conversions were often attended with very considerable expense. He believed that so inexhaustible was the quantity of foreign corn, that unless our prices were brought to the level of the continental, the deluge of continental corn would be immense. They would find that the soil and climate of the southern States of America were peculiarly adapted for the cultivation of the cotton plant, and that the price of cotton in those States regulated the price of cotton to the producers of that article in other parts of the world. This remark held equally good with respect to indigo; and as it applied to cotton and indigo, so it would apply to foreign corn, for the price of the latter grain in the greatest market would be sure

to regulate the price in all other places. He would not say that Government should not adapt the Corn Laws to the circumstances of the country; but he did not think that anything had occurred to justify the proposal of a total abolition. If they had brought forward a measure proposing a lower scale of duties for three years, or perhaps a fixed duty, with the view of seeing the effect of such a measure, he would have said that they had acted like cautious people, and that there was nothing like the rashness of the present proposal about it; but he confessed he did not see the sense of their pledging themselves in 1846 as to what they would do in 1849, when the three intervening years might show them that they were in a wrong course. And if he thought this unwise in any one, he thought it peculiarly unwise in a Government which in 1842 did not know what they were to do in 1846, and who in 1846 repudiated their own measure of 1842. For these few reasons he should give his vote against the second reading of this Bill. If he wanted other reasons, he should find them in one of the paragraphs of Her Majesty's Speech, or rather the Speech which the Government had put into the mouth of Her Majesty, at the commencement of the Session, because he thought that the measures were not accompanied with such precautions as would prevent permanent loss to the revenue, or injurious results to any of the great interests of the country. Before sitting down he wished to say a few words upon the petitions which had been presented at the commencement of this stage of the discussion by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government. These petitions were said to have been signed by most of the respectable merchants of Liverpool and Manchester, and complained that the trade of the country was in a state of great stagnation in consequence of the prolongation of the discussion. Now he did not think it necessary to ask hon. Members to rely on his assertion; but he begged to state it as a fact, and let any Gentleman connected with the trade of the country contradict him if he asserted what was not the case, that the stagnation affected every article, whether it were in the Tariff or not. Sugar, tea, coffee, and cotton, were equally in a state of stagnation with the articles in the Tariff. But, if the right hon. Baronet had asked the persons who signed these petitions whether or not there were any extensive engagements that parties in

Lancashire and the north of England had entered into with the great railroads, and whether these did not interfere with the course of trade, he would have found out that these were much more likely to have caused the embarrassments in trade under which the country was now labouring, than the allegations made in the petition presented by the right hon. Baronet. When the noble Lord opposite should come into power—as he was likely soon to do—he would find the same distress which the country was now suffering, if some means were not discovered of checking the immense absorption of capital; and the noble Lord would probably be charged with being the cause of that distress, to which he would be as little amenable as the Government of the right hon. Baronet was to the credit of the prosperity which succeeded their accession to office in 1842. He believed that that success had nothing to do with the change of Government—that it was the inevitable consequence of three or four years' previous depression of trade; and he believed that if the country had never been blessed with the present Government, we should have had the same number of years of prosperity as we had had under their rule. He believed also that the present stagnation was partly attributable to the immense exports of last year. The hon. Gentleman concluded by declaring his intention to vote against the second reading of the Bill.

SIR ROBERT PEEL said: Sir, the hon. Gentleman who spoke last appears to have repented of the neutrality which he observed on a former occasion, and to have determined to make up for that neutrality by the sharpness of his present attack. I have heard, indeed, from one hon. Gentleman, the Member for Newark, a young Member of this House, that I have been treated with marked forbearance during the discussion upon this measure. I think, then, that under the circumstances I might have expected a little more indulgence from the hon. Member for Winchester. I did, it is true, present two petitions, one from Manchester, and one from Liverpool; and the hon. Gentleman is so captious, that he finds even in the performance of that duty grounds for making an attack upon me. All I did, however, was to state the prayer of those petitions. The petitioners are connected with the manufacturing and commercial interests of the country; and I think that the hon. Gentleman, considering the community of

occupation between himself and the petitioners, might have allowed them unquestioned to speak for themselves. The petition from Manchester was signed by the President of the Chamber of Commerce—a body entertaining strong political opinions, and many of whom have been connected with the agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws. In order, however, to show the unanimity of opinion which prevailed upon this question, the petition was also signed by the President of the Commercial Association—a body holding political opinions of an opposite tendency to those entertained by the Chamber of Commerce; but they, notwithstanding, on this subject came to the same conclusion. To the same conclusion came all the bankers of Manchester; as did also, I believe, the vast majority of the inhabitants of that town connected with great manufacturing establishments. These parties concurred in addressing a petition to this House; and they concurred in attributing the stagnation of trade to the prolongation of the debates; and expressed their opinion that the stagnation will continue until the decision of this House shall be finally pronounced upon the question: praying, therefore, that the House will, at as early a period as may be consistent with mature deliberation, come to a decision upon the subject. Sir, the hon. Gentleman is a proof of how exceedingly difficult it would be to devise any measure connected with the Corn Laws which shall please all parties. But I think the hon. Gentleman stands almost alone in this House upon this question. The hon. Gentleman who so violently attacks the measures of the Government, says, if we had proposed a cautious measure of this nature—that the scale of duties which I propose to exist for three years should be carried into execution, and at the end of that period there should be a fixed duty—he should have been inclined to vote for such a proposal. He has not quite made up his mind whether he would vote for it or not; but still, he is so favourably disposed towards it that he thinks he should have been inclined to adopt it. Well, I think he is the only man in the House who would have supported that proposition. The hon. Gentleman makes another charge against me, at which I am somewhat surprised. He says, that every Irish Member ought to be indignant with me for interposing delay, instead of relieving the distress which prevails in Ireland. Indignant with

me! I am not conscious of occasioning any delay. Circumstances may have interposed obstacles for which I feel regret; but that the hon. Gentleman has any right to rouse the indignation of the Irish Members against me for interposing delay in the way of extending relief to the distress which prevails in Ireland, I entirely deny; and it is a charge which I think cannot be fairly made against me by any hon. Member of this House. I am extremely unwilling, at this protracted stage of the debate, to refer to personal matters; and were I a private individual, I would pass by all such accusations as I have heard made against me. I am so conscious of having acted throughout from pure and honourable motives, I am so supported by the conviction that I have abandoned no duty, and betrayed no trust—[*Interruption*—well, if it be your impression that I have, at least, after the accusations which have been preferred, you will concede to me the privilege of defence, and will listen with patience to the answer which I have to give you. Observe, throughout these debates I have not quarrelled with any man for offering his opposition to the opinions which I now profess. I have respected in others the maintenance of their former opinions. I knew not by whom the measures which I proposed would be supported on this side of the House. I can say with truth, that I have attempted to influence no man. I have listened to the attacks made upon me with sorrow, but not with anger. I admit it is natural that hon. Gentlemen should retain their opinion; but if they do not respect in me that privilege which I concede to them, at any rate I entreat them, from a sense of justice, to hear with patience my defence. As I said, if I were a mere private individual, strong in the conviction that I have acted from nothing but a sense of duty, and from pure and honourable motives, I would have let these accusations pass by; but I am not in the situation of a private individual, and it is right that, as Minister of the Crown, I should vindicate from the attacks made upon it my conduct as a Minister of the Crown. I have been asked—it is not, I know, quite regular to refer to former debates, and I shall not encroach upon the rule of the House by express reference to the debates—but the House will permit me to refer in general to the questions which were put, and to the charges which were made, since I have had an opportunity of last addressing the House.

It was said then, in the course of the late debate, that I had expressed an opinion that the charge of this measure for the adjustment of the Corn Laws would have been committed with much greater propriety to other hands than mine. And yet it was observed that I had proposed to the Cabinet to undertake the conduct of this measure, and that if the Cabinet had been unanimous the conduct of it would have been committed to my hands. Further, it was remarked that there was thus an apparent inconsistency between the opinion that it would have been better to submit the proposition to other hands, and my undertaking, had the Cabinet concurred with me, to propose the permanent adjustment of this question, as a consequence of the temporary suspension of the law. Sir, I did pronounce an opinion that it would have been better, under any ordinary circumstances, that others more entitled than I am to the credit of the success of this measure, should have had the conduct of it. And yet it is true that in the Cabinet I did propose, if the Cabinet concurred with me, to undertake the task of submitting the proposition to Parliament. On the 1st of November, I proposed, in concurrence with my right hon. Friends the Secretary at War and the Secretary of State for the Home Department, upon the ground of the reports from Ireland, to take that precaution against impending danger which I thought was a natural precaution, namely, the suspension, either by an Order in Council or an Act of Parliament, of those laws prohibiting the importation of foreign corn. I renewed that proposition at the close of the same month. I believe, had the measure proposed been simply the suspension of the Corn Laws, with a guarantee that the existing system should revive, I believe—I have no grounds for not believing—that there would have been no very serious difference of opinion on the subject. There might have been a difference of opinion as to the extent of the danger in Ireland; but had the measure been merely a suspension with a guarantee of revival, or at least that I would propose the continuance of the existing law, I am not sure that we should have had any difference of opinion on the matter. But I did distinctly refuse—I here admit it—I did distinctly refuse to undertake a guarantee for the revival of the existing law at the end of the period of suspension, and I did it upon these grounds. As I said before, I thought that suspension was a

becoming and necessary measure. The right hon. Gentleman the Recorder of Dublin says that we were deluded by accounts from Ireland. He admits, however, that he was alarmed at the outset, and that the prevailing feeling through Ireland was one of alarm; but then he talked of as unfounded the reports made from time to time by official bodies in Ireland. It is very easy for an individual to neglect those reports; but those responsible for the well-being of the country—deeply responsible should famine and disease come without precautions being taken to meet them—what are they, what is a Government to do—a Government receiving reports from all quarters—from the highest authorities—from private parties the most disinterested—what, I ask, would be the position of a Government which should meet such warnings with neglect? The alarm may turn out to be unfounded, and the precautions, therefore, superfluous; but do you think that when there is good ground—probable ground—for expecting a general and wide-spread famine, do you think that a Government ought, in such a case, to neglect to take precautions, even should those precautions turn out to be superfluous? Are you to hesitate in averting famine which may come, because it possibly may not come? Are you to look to and depend upon chance in such an extremity? Or, good God! are you to sit in Cabinet, and consider and calculate how much diarrhoea, and bloody flux, and dysentery, a people can bear before it becomes necessary for you to provide them with food? The precautions may be superfluous; but what is the danger where precautions are required? Is it not better to err on the side of precaution than to neglect it utterly? I say that, with the reports received by Government, in my opinion we should not have been justified in neglecting that precaution. Of course, then, the question arose, "What will you do when the period of suspension shall have terminated?" Will you guarantee the revival of the law? That question was put to me. I said at once I cannot, and for many reasons. In the first place, in the last Session of Parliament I expressed a decided opinion that you could not long continue to apply different principles in respect to agriculture from those you had applied to other articles of commerce. I am told I made a sudden turn—that I surprised every one. Well, hear my defence. Speaking on the Corn Law, in the course of last Session, on

the Resolution of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, while I opposed that Resolution, I stated that I could not defend the existing law on many of the grounds on which it had theretofore been defended. I could not say that I thought the rate of wages varied with the price of corn. I could not defend the law on the ground that we ought to be independent of foreign supply. I stated expressly then, that in my opinion the same principle which formed our ordinary commercial policy must also be applied to agriculture. I was followed by the noble Lord the then Member for Sunderland (Earl Grey), who began his speech by stating expressly that I had made no objection to the first Resolution of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton. Here are his words: he said—

"In Sir Robert Peel's speech there had not been one word uttered attempting to contradict the two first Resolutions of his hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton. Had the last Resolution been worded to the effect 'that it was expedient that all restrictions on the importation of corn be gradually abolished,' the right hon. Baronet's speech would have been an unanswerable speech in support of the hon. Member's Motion."

Such was the speech of the noble Lord. Now what was the resolution of the Protection Society in the month of December? Hear it, and say whether the late declaration of opinion in my case can be considered as so sudden or surprising. The Protection Society, I say, came to this resolution:—

"That, in consequence of the declarations made by several leading Members of Government during the last Session of Parliament, it was evident that a further reduction would be attempted in the already greatly diminished amount of protection now afforded to agriculture, and that, in consequence of such interpretation being put on these declarations, an impression, well or ill-founded, is circulated, calculated to destroy all confidence in the stability of the present Corn Laws, and to arrest the progress now making in the improvement of inferior lands."

Such was the resolution of the Protection Society in December last, before they were or could be aware of the measures to be proposed by Government. [Mr. HUDSON made a remark which did not reach the gallery.] Will the hon. Member for Sunderland have a little patience? His turn will come. Really these interruptions are very unpleasant. I continue then. When the question was put whether I would undertake a guarantee for the revival of the existing law, I said distinctly that such a guarantee on my part, after the opinions which I had expressed, would be inconsistent with my former declaration. Such a

revival must have implied the permanent maintenance of the Corn Law. You must have roused all your energies in defence of it. Lords, Commons, and constituencies must have united for the maintenance, the permanent maintenance, of the existing law. To such an attempt it was impossible that I could have been a party. Another ground, Sir, upon which I declined to guarantee the revival was, that I thought the very fact of suspension would make it almost impossible to induce Parliament to re-enact the present law. It would have been said, "The system has worked tolerably well in three favourable seasons, but at the first period of pressure you suspended it; you were obliged to do so." The proposal would then be, that after this suspension—that after this confession of the law's weakness—this impeachment of its adequacy—you should, notwithstanding, urge at the termination of the period of suspension its permanent revival. Sir, I confess I did not think that a very wise course to adopt. It has been justly remarked, during the progress of this debate, that when the noble Lord opposite (Lord John Russell), seeing how difficult it would be at times of scarcity to maintain a fixed duty, proposed that a power should be given to the Crown, by an Order in Council, to suspend that fixed duty. It has been truly stated that when that proposition was made, I decidedly objected to conferring such a power on the Crown. I stated that it would be futile, because the Crown, having once exercised the power of suspending the fixed duty, I felt assured, in the present state of public opinion on the Corn Laws, that it would be most difficult, or even impossible, to reimpose the duty. Now, the difficulty involved in the course proposed to me for adoption would be the same, with the difference that the fixed duty would be much lower than the actual amount of the sliding scale. The proposal, in fact, would be that the sliding scale having failed in its first exposure to severe trial, and it being thus found necessary to suspend it—the proposal would be, that after that suspension the same principle, worked out by the same machinery, should be re-enacted—should be again adopted. Well, supposing this course to have been adopted, at what period would it have been settled that the revival was to take place? The duties might have been suspended until September next. In the month of July, a few weeks before the time Parliament must

separate, what would have been the state of this House on the question of whether or no the suspension should continue? Supposing there were entertained the apprehensions which I felt, and which I still feel, that this potato disease is not a mere temporary calamity—suppose there should be good grounds, probable grounds, for believing that the potato crop of next year would also be affected—suppose there should be, as there will be, disease in Ireland in consequence of want of food—suppose all these contingencies to occur—could the proposal, under the circumstances, be made that the old law should be permitted to revive? Further, suppose you are to have such a July as you had last season—such a month of continued rain as that which last year made "the boldest hold his breath for a time," would it have been, I put it to you, would it have been under these circumstances possible to have agreed to a renewal of the old law? Sir, I was not insensible to the progress of public opinion on this point. I do not say yield to it—yield to public opinion against your convictions; but I do say that that man is unworthy of holding office who disregards the progress of public opinion on such a question as the Corn Laws; and whether or no they are to be re-enacted after a period of suspension. You say they have been already suspended and already re-enacted. You say they were suspended in 1765 and in 1793; and that on both those occasions they were re-enacted, and that precedents are all in favour of their being re-enacted. Why, good God! can any man be so blind to the progress of public opinion on the Corn Laws since the year 1765, as to say that you can apply that precedent, and because the Legislature of that day could re-enact prohibitive duties, do you mean to say that we could do it now? If you act upon such principles—if you pay regard to such narrow, technical, Parliamentary precedents, without reference to public opinion, then I tell you that you will involve the country, in a month, in inextricable confusion. I am unwilling to make any statement now; but as I foresaw, when this proposition was made, it would break up the Government, and as I have the permission of Her Majesty to give any explanation with respect to the causes which led to that dissolution of the Government, I will rather than enter into any statement, read to the House the declaration I made of the ground on which I acted, and which, as I foresaw it would be of great importance, I made at

the time in writing; that statement of my opinions I will now read. This was on the 26th of November, after the Government had instituted an inquiry into the apprehended scarcity, and taken precautions against the spread of fever that might be the consequence of that scarcity; in the instructions then issued, my right hon. Friends cordially concurred. But I foresaw that the issue of those instructions would compel a suspension of the law restricting the importation of food. And this is the very point at which I wish to arrive—whether I should undertake after the suspension to propose to Parliament the adjustment of the Corn Laws. I did undertake it, and under these circumstances: As I could not propose the revival of the existing law—as I thought any slight alterations in the details of the present sliding scale, any slight modifications, would be utterly unavailing for the permanent adjustment which would be the legitimate consequence of suspension: I did undertake to do that which in ordinary circumstances I certainly think ought to have been undertaken by others, and I did engage to meet the existing emergency, and to become responsible for all the consequences of suspension. I drew up then, and I read to my Colleagues, the memorandum I hold in my hand previously to the dissolution of the Cabinet.—The right hon. Baronet then proceeded to read the following document:—

“I cannot consent to the issue of these instructions, and undertake at the same time to maintain the existing Corn Law. Slight modifications of the existing law, as the consequence of these instructions, or immediately following them, would, in my opinion, answer no good end. The proposal of them would add to the difficulty of defending that portion of the Corn Law which it was sought to maintain. I think we ought to suspend the operation of the existing law for a limited period. There is conflicting evidence as to the degree of pressure from the scarcity of food; but there is that probability of severe pressure a few months hence that would in my opinion amply justify the precautionary measure of unrestricted import. We have written authority which would justify it, written authority which, should the anticipations of those from whom we receive it prove correct, would impose on us a heavy responsibility for having neglected a precaution which has been taken in former periods of scarcity in this country, and by some countries in Europe within the last week. But, independently of these considerations, the issue of these instructions fully justifies, if it does not require the temporary removal of impediments to the free import of corn. They contain a proof not only that the crisis is great—not only that there is the probability of severe suffering from the scarcity of food; but the proof that we are ourselves convinced of it. It appears

to me that the suspension of the Corn Law would be the course most consistent with these instructions. I will not refer to the preceding discussions in the Cabinet; but the issue of these instructions, placing on record our deliberate conviction as to the possible extent of the evil with which we have to contend as a new event. By acting now, the lapse of time since we last met in Cabinet would be accounted for. I am prepared for one to take the responsibility of suspending the law by an Order in Council, or of calling Parliament at a very early period, and advising in the Speech from the Throne the suspension of the law. I conceal from myself none of the difficulties that attend a suspension of the law. Suspension of the law will compel a very early decision on the course to be pursued in anticipation of the period when the suspension would expire. Suspension will compel a deliberate review of the whole question of agricultural protection. I firmly believe that it would be better for the country that that review should be undertaken by others. Under ordinary circumstances I should advise that it should be so undertaken; but I look now to the immediate emergency, and to the duties it imposes on a Minister. I am ready to take the responsibility of meeting that emergency, if the opinions of my Colleagues as to the extent of the evil, and the nature of the remedy, concur with mine.”

I, therefore, Sir, thought that the adjustment of the Corn Laws would be the natural consequence of the suspension of the laws. I felt that it would be inconsistent with my duty to suspend the law, and then to run away and leave it to others to deal with the consequences. I was prepared then to propose an adjustment of the question of duties on foreign corn—I was prepared to do so had my Colleagues agreed with me, notwithstanding the declaration which I made then, and which I repeat now, that under ordinary circumstances I should have preferred that the task should have been left to other hands than mine. If there be any inconsistency in that, I am ready to incur the blame of it; but I confess I think the course I adopted, the natural and fitting course for a Minister in my position. I was, however, in a minority in the Cabinet. When there was no longer unanimity amongst my Colleagues, I despaired of success in carrying the measures I intended, and therefore the Cabinet was dissolved. My hon. Friend the Member for Dorsetshire blames me very much because, after resigning, I wrote a letter to Her Majesty stating the course I intended to pursue. He says that was a most unconstitutional and a most unusual act. Unusual I admit it to be, but the circumstances were altogether unusual. Unconstitutional I cannot admit it to be. That a Privy Councillor should state to his Sovereign what course under very peculiar circumstances he was prepared to pursue,

I cannot admit to be unconstitutional. A Peer has a right to seek an audience of Her Majesty, and tender his advice; a Privy Councillor has a right to do so also. True, my official relation to Her Majesty had terminated; I was no longer a Minister, but being a Privy Councillor I conceived I had a perfect right to intimate to Her Majesty—I did it with a view of preventing embarrassment—having advised certain measures, having been prepared to propose them as a Minister, I had a right to state what those measures were, and that, as a private Member of Parliament, I would give to them a cordial support. And what were the circumstances under which that assurance was conveyed? My hon. Friend says that I prevented the formation of a Conservative Government—of a Protection Government, I mean. I did no such thing. [Mr. BANKES: What I said was, that you prevented a dissolution of Parliament.] The circumstances under which I wrote that letter, which my hon. Friend complains of as unconstitutional, were these—[Mr. G. BANKES:—I beg pardon, I did not say unconstitutional.] Oh, then, the whole matter falls to the ground. [Mr. G. BANKES: I said it was unprecedented and dangerous as an example.] Well, that is very like unconstitutional. An hon. Member, I think, told the House that he did not say “gross exaggeration,” but “great exaggeration;” and now my hon. Friend tells us, that he did not say “unconstitutional,” but “unprecedented and dangerous.” Unprecedented! and were not the circumstances unprecedented? I felt it my duty—my right hon. friends around me took the same view, and felt it their duty—to quit Her Majesty’s service; it was distinctly intimated to me that those of my Colleagues who differed from me were not prepared to form a Government themselves, nor yet to advise the formation of a Government upon the principle of protection; the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) and Lord Lansdowne declined to undertake the Government, until they had an assurance that others, who might be presumed to have a majority, were not ready to undertake the Government. Her Majesty sent for the noble Lord opposite—the noble Lord was in a minority of ninety—and it was proposed by Her Majesty to him that he should undertake the formation of a Government. The circumstances were unusual; but I ask any man to judge whether under such circumstances the course which I took in giving an assurance to Her Ma-

jesty that the measures on the subject of the Corn Law which I was willing to propose as a Minister, I would cordially support as a private Member of Parliament, was either justly blameable or dangerous to the State? Of course the noble Lord was entitled to ask, “What are my prospects, I do not say of carrying on the Government permanently, but of adjusting the Corn Law? Nothing could induce me to undertake it excepting the prospect of success; what is the support I may expect?” I anticipated any such question, by enabling Her Majesty to inform the noble Lord of the course I had myself taken; and as others were not prepared to form a Government, I felt it my duty to intimate to Her Majesty that I would cordially support the measures I had advised in office. If it is unprecedented, it is because the circumstances are unprecedented; but I see nothing in it either blameable or dangerous in the slightest degree as an example. But my hon. Friend says, he did not object to it as impeding the formation of a protection Government, but as preventing a dissolution; and my hon. Friend and others have blamed me for not advising a dissolution of Parliament. In my opinion it would have been utterly inconsistent with the duty of a Minister to advise a dissolution of Parliament under the particular circumstances in which this question of the Corn Law was placed. Why should it be so utterly impossible for this Parliament to deal with the present proposition? After its election in 1841, this Parliament passed the existing Corn Law which diminished protection; this Parliament passed the Tariff, destroying altogether the system of prohibition with respect to food; this Parliament passed the Canada Corn Bill; why should it exceed the functions of this Parliament to entertain the present proposition? But, upon much higher ground, I would not consent to a dissolution. That indeed, I think, would have been “a dangerous precedent,” for a Minister to admit that the existing Legislature was incompetent to the entertainment of any question; that is a precedent which I would not establish. Whatever may have been the circumstances that may have taken place at an election, I never would sanction the view that any House of Commons is incompetent to entertain a measure which is necessary for the well-being of the community. If you were to admit that doctrine, you would shake the foundations on which many of the best laws are placed. Why,

that doctrine was propounded at the time of the Union between England and Ireland, as it had previously been at the time of the Union between England and Scotland; it was maintained in Ireland very vehemently; but it was not maintained in this country by Mr. Fox. It was slightly adverted to by Mr. Sheridan at the time when the message with regard to the Union was delivered. Parliament had been elected without the slightest reason to believe it would resolve that its functions were to be fused and mixed with those of another Legislature, namely, the Irish Parliament; and Mr. Sheridan slightly hinted it, as an objection to the competency of Parliament. Mr. Pitt met that objection, at the outset, in the following manner. Mr. Pitt said—

“The first objection is, what I heard alluded to by the hon. Gentleman opposite to me, when His Majesty’s Message was brought down, namely, that the Parliament of Ireland is incompetent to entertain and discuss the question, or rather, to act upon the measure proposed, without having previously obtained the consent of the people of Ireland, their constituents. This point, Sir, is of so much importance, that I think I ought not to suffer the opportunity to pass without illustrating more fully what I mean. If this principle of the incompetency of Parliament to the decision of the measure be admitted, or if it be contended that Parliament has no legitimate authority to discuss and decide upon it, you will be driven to the necessity of recognizing a principle the most dangerous that ever was adopted in any civilized State—I mean the principle that Parliament cannot adopt any measure new in its nature, and of great importance, without appealing to the constituent and delegating authority for directions. If that doctrine be true, look to what an extent it will carry you. If such an argument could be set up and maintained, you acted without any legitimate authority when you created the representation of the Principality of Wales, or of either of the counties palatine of England. Every law that Parliament ever made, without that appeal, either as to its own frame and constitution, as to the qualification of the electors or the elected, as to the great and fundamental point of the succession to the Crown, was a breach of treaty and an act of usurpation.”

Then, Mr. Pitt asked, if they turned to Ireland herself, what would they say to the Protestant Parliament that destroyed the exclusive Protestant franchise, and admitted the Roman Catholics to vote, without any fresh appeal? Mr. Pitt went on:—

“What must be said by those who have at any time been friends to any plan of Parliamentary Reform, and particularly such as have been most recently brought forward, either in Great Britain or Ireland? Whatever may have been thought of the propriety of the measure, I never heard any doubt of the competency of Parliament to consider and discuss it. Yet I defy any man to maintain the principle of those plans, without contending

that, as a Member of Parliament, he possesses a right to concur in disfranchising those who sent him to Parliament, and to select others, by whom he was not elected, in their stead. I am sure that no sufficient distinction, in point of principle, can be successfully maintained for a single moment; nor should I deem it necessary to dwell on this point in the manner that I do were I not convinced that it is connected in part with all those false and dangerous notions on the subject of Government which have lately become too prevalent in the world.”

Mr. Pitt contended, therefore, that Parliament had a right to alter the succession to the Throne, to incorporate with itself another Legislature, to disfranchise its constituents, or associate others with them. Why, is it possible for a Minister now to advise the Crown to dissolve Parliament, on the ground that it is incompetent to entertain the question what this country shall do with the Corn Law? There could not be a more dangerous example, a more purely democratical precedent; if I may so say, than that this Parliament should be dissolved on the ground of its incompetency to decide upon any question of this nature. I am open to the charge, therefore, if it be one, that I did advise Her Majesty to permit this measure to be brought forward in the present Parliament. Now I am not aware of any other matter of mere personal character brought forward against me; there is no one part of my personal conduct of which I am not ready to give a full explanation; if I have omitted any, it has been unintentionally, and if any hon. Member has any question to put to me, I will answer it. Then I come to the question itself—Is it for the public interest—is it advisable, that, under the present circumstances of this country, in the present state of public opinion, we should now either refuse to modify the law, in order to meet the case of Irish distress, or that, having modified it, we should have a new Corn Law, or that we should try to adjust permanently this question? The hon. Gentleman who spoke last says—

“You might have dealt with maize and nothing else; maize is the food the Irish people require, and why not admit maize and nothing else?”

Why, if you want to undermine this Corn Law effectually, it will be done by taking such a course as that—by holding out to a people suffering under severe privation that maize is food good enough for them, and that the law as to maize shall be altered, but that as to wheat, barley, and oats you will not permit a letter of the law to be touched. If you were to venture to make

such an experiment upon public opinion, you would rouse a storm of indignation against the law you attempted to maintain such as would make it impossible to maintain it. And what is it you would do with respect to maize? There is a duty of 8s. on it now. Our doctrine is, that the Government cannot support the people of Ireland; that we can do nothing without earnest local exertions; we all say that those local exertions ought to be made, that the duties of charity are imperative though they cannot be legally enforced, that it is the duty of the landlords of Ireland, and of all classes possessing property, to co-operate with us in mitigating the evils of this great calamity. It is all very well for us to pay the duty upon maize or oats, paying with one hand and taking with the other, as we distribute it to the people; but what are we to say to those whom we are inciting to acts of charity? Are we to say to them, that potatoes are failing, and other food must be supplied, but that they shall pay an 8s. duty upon maize, and an 18s. upon wheat, and there shall be no relaxation of that law? Say what you will about this Irish distress, mitigate it as much as you please—do you think it would be possible (even with the extent to which you cannot deny that it exists), to vote half a million of money from the English Treasury for the support of the Irish people, and to incite Irish proprietors to acts of charity, and to the purchase of food for the support of the famishing people; and yet, in the face of every country in Europe that is at this moment threatened with scarcity, Holland and Belgium, the Russian provinces, and within these four or five days the whole kingdom of Bavaria, and after they have adopted that which the heart of every man tells him is the natural precaution to take, namely, the removal of impediments to the free import of food; yet, say that you will make no relaxation whatever in the existing Corn Laws? I believe that would be hardly possible. The right hon. Gentleman the Member for the University of Dublin (Mr. Shaw) says he cannot deny that there does exist a great scarcity in Ireland. I took down his words. What said he? He said—

“I cannot deny that there is a great scarcity, and also that there is great danger of disease; but these are common things in Ireland—this is the normal state of Ireland. A large portion of the Irish people,” said he, “are always living on the verge of destitution. There has been no year in

my recollection when the same statement as to disease might not be made.”

Well, be it so; that, you will say, goes some way to nullify the argument in favour of the present proposition. But, in the face of that declaration, will you tell me that this is a labourer's question? Will you say that the maintenance of protection is for the benefit of the Irish agricultural labourer, if protection has brought him to this? In that part of the United Kingdom, which is almost exclusively agricultural, which may be said to depend on agriculture, has protection brought you to this—that, speaking of the agricultural labourers, a large portion of the Irish people are “always living on the verge of destitution?” Is it true, “that there has been no year within your recollection when the same statement might not have been made?” Well, be it as you say. Admit that this is the permanent, the usual state of Ireland—does that afford any strong argument for the maintenance of the existing Corn Laws? But you will answer, if that has been the permanent state of Ireland, why did not you introduce this measure before? Surely, however, that is no reason against our doing it now. You are so pressed by the force of the argument, that the only answer you can make is, “Why did you not do it before?” Well, no doubt we might have done it before. Perhaps we have neglected at former periods our duty; but is that any reason why we should neglect it at present? If you have a potato-fed people, and consequently many millions depending on the supply of an article of food like the potato, subject to such diminution of quantity and deterioration of quality as we have been visited with in this year—if that be the permanent state of Ireland, does it not afford a paramount reason for attempting to effect some permanent change, and not merely supplying a temporary remedy? I think to do nothing would be impossible. To modify the existing law—to propose as a permanent system such a change in the law as that proposed by the hon. Member for Southampton (Mr. Mildmay)—a sliding-scale for three years and then a fixed duty—such a change as that would only encourage agitation on the one hand, while by the agricultural body it would be rejected with scorn—laughed at—scouted. Such an arrangement would effect no good, produce no benefit. Then what is left? Is there any alternative but trying to lay the

foundation for an ultimate adjustment, by repealing those laws? My firm conviction is, that it is for the interest of all, of the agricultural interest in particular, that this in the present state of affairs is the safest course. The hon. Member for Newark asked me repeatedly whether I meant to ruin the agriculturist interest? Sir, I attach the utmost importance to the prosperity of the agricultural interest. ["Oh!" and ironical cheers from the *protection benches*.] Why, I don't know for what reason I have not as much right to feel an interest in the prosperity of agriculture as any of those who received that sentiment with scorn. Why, what possible interest can I have to injure that interest? I attach the utmost importance to it. I think, for great political reasons, it is of the utmost importance that the agricultural interest should have great weight and authority in the government of this country. I think, with Burke, that land is the safest basis of political power. He says, "All the writers,"—and he quotes Aristotle as speaking of the Grecian States, and Cicero as speaking of Rome—"All the writers on politics have attached the utmost importance to land, and have declared that it is the safest basis of a sound and permanent Government." I concur in that opinion, and deeply should I deplore the day when the landed interest of this country should be excluded from its full share in its councils and legislation. But Burke adds, with equal truth, that, fortunately for this country, land has directed its councils, the reason being that the landed aristocracy and the landed proprietors have never been as a class dissociated from the general interest, but subjecting themselves to the influence and the progress of public opinion, and proving their unity of interest with all. Why, that is just the question. By what means shall we secure the continuance in the just influence of the landed interest of this country? Is it by maintaining your privileges on the ground of the exclusion of food? ["No!"] Well, then, on the ground of taxation on the importation of foreign corn? I will call it by which name you wish; it is not, certainly, the "exclusion" of food. But the question is, will it more conduce to the permanent, just, and legitimate influence of the land in this country that these Corn Laws should at length be repealed, or that they should be continued in all their integrity? Now, my firm conviction—accuse me of treachery if you please

—is, that you will fortify and maintain the influence of the land by this arrangement, rather than, in the present state of public feeling, by pertinaciously insisting on maintaining the present laws. Look, for example, at the tax on butter. That, at any rate, is not a tax of 400 or 500 years' standing. The taxes on butter and cheese were introduced within a few years. Why should the removal of those taxes be construed into any assault on the privileges of the landed interest? Let us consider the bearing of this question of the Corn Laws on the great interests of this country, upon the land and the landed aristocracy, the legitimate influence of which I hope to see maintained for ever. We have to deal with a population which by the last census, that of 1841, consisted of about 19,000,000 people. [An hon. MEMBER: Twenty-seven.] I am excluding Ireland; if I were to include Ireland in my present calculation I should greatly fortify my position. In this country we have 19,000,000 of people. Now, how are they divided? You have of persons engaged in or connected with the agricultural interest about 1,500,000, not including women and children; of landed proprietors, farmers, and occupiers of land, and persons above and under twenty years of age, employed in agriculture, about 1,500,000; you have of labourers engaged in other occupations about 761,000, including all those classes who labour in mines and quarries, and so on; of persons engaged in trade and manufactures, including all the commercial and manufacturing classes, you have 3,111,000; 200,000 persons belonging to the learned professions, including educated persons following miscellaneous occupations; 511,000 persons independent or living on their fortunes; and 200,000 paupers, lunatics, and so on. Now, just considering what a vast proportion of that great mass of people, 19,000,000 altogether—what a vast proportion of that mass consists of people who earn their subsistence by manual labour, and must subsist upon wages under 30s. a week? And just consider how taxation, wholly apart from the tax on food—just consider, I say, how taxation for the State presses on that class of the community. You raise about 32,000,000*l.* of taxes by the Customs and Excise. Take those articles which enter into the consumption of a family, the head of which earns less than 30s. a week. I have returns here of those articles which are in weekly use by families of that class.

Now, what are these articles, independent of bread? They are butter, cheese, a little meat, bacon, lard, candles, soap, and a little tobacco. Hardly any one of those articles is free from being taxed. Let us see what is the influence of taxation on that class of the community. It is inevitable, with a system of indirect taxation, that they must pay heavily; but I know, if the burden presses unjustly upon them, it is from no want of sympathy on the part of the gentlemen of England; it is, however, inevitable: we must raise a great part of our taxation by indirect taxes, and the burden will be unequally distributed. You have, and my belief is, that you have established a just claim to the confidence and the gratitude of this country, relieved those classes to some extent. You did take upon yourselves the burden of raising 5,000,000*l.* a year by means of the Income Tax, not only to supply a deficiency, but to relieve the labouring classes from some of the taxation that pressed too heavily upon them. In order that I may be perfectly accurate, I will here state, from documents which I hold in my hand, the actual consumption of a labourer, earning 10*s.* a week in summer, and 9*s.* a week in winter, he having a wife and one child. This is an actual return of the consumption of this one individual and his family. He bought four gallons of bread—but put that out of the question at present—he bought 1½*lb.* of cheese, some bacon, some salt meat, some butter, some tea and sugar, some candles, and some soap. Now, with the exception of candles, the duty on which was removed very recently, all these things are taxed. By the Tariff now proposed, we remove the duty from bacon and from salt meat, and we diminish the duty on butter and on cheese. Can you repent that I have made that proposition? The man died, leaving a widow and a child. The widow earned 4*s.* 6*d.* a week, and the guardians allowed her 1*s.* 6*d.* for the child; and this was her weekly expenditure—rent, 1*s.* 6*d.*; candle and soap, 4½*d.*; butter, 2½*d.*; tea, 1½*d.*; sugar, 2*d.*; and with her expenditure for bread she was left with only 1*s.* 8*d.* for firing, shoes, clothes, &c., all of which it was very difficult for her to buy out of that sum of 1*s.* 8*d.* Even in that case the soap and the candles, the butter, the tea, and the sugar, all were taxed. Now, Sir, let me take the case of a Yorkshireman spending more money, living on better fare, and earning more wages. This, too, is a

bonâ fide return of actual expenditure. This man earned 15*s.* or 16*s.* a week, out of which he spent 14*s.*, and the expenditure was thus—meat, 2*s.*; sugar, 7*d.*; cheese, 7*d.*; soap and candles, 3½*d.*; butter, 8*d.*; tea and coffee, 1*s.* 6*d.*; and oatmeal, 7½*d.*, making altogether 6*s.* 3*d.* What was the expenditure of that man for wheat flour? No less than 8*s.* a week out of 14*s.* Every week he had to buy three stone of flour, which, for the last few years, had ranged at 2*s.* 8*d.* a stone. Six shillings he spent upon all other necessities, but wheat constituted the great part of his expenditure—on wheat flour he was compelled to spend more than one half of his wages. Now, supposing the abolition of the law were to cause some reduction in the price of wheat flour—just ask yourselves this—suppose it does cause some reduction, are you not most materially adding to the comfort and the enjoyment of those classes? This is by far the most important aspect under which you can view the question. I know the real sympathy you have for the condition of the working classes. I do not agree with those who throw imputations upon your humanity. I know that the gentlemen of England are most sincere in their sympathy for the suffering of the poor, and earnestly desire to better their condition. I know that that desire actuates you as much, if not more, than any other class of the community; and I ask you to consider the expenditure of a working man, which I have laid before you. You cannot increase direct taxation with any advantage—I believe you would if you could. You raise 7,000,000*l.* by stamps, 5,000,000*l.* by the Income Tax, and 4,000,000*l.* by the assessed taxes. You may add to the Income Tax without at all benefiting the poor, as there are limits to this direct taxation. You may carry the tax upon capital to too great an extent, and although it falls at first upon the rich, it would end by more seriously injuring the poor than indirect taxation. Adam Smith says, “The first maxim with respect to taxation is, that every man shall contribute to the taxation of the State in proportion to the amount of property he enjoys under the protection of the State.” Now, are you able to apply that maxim to the case of the Yorkshireman whose expenditure I have given you? I much doubt whether taxation does not fall much heavier on his class than upon us. The poor cannot resort to other countries where the scale of

taxation is less than here. They are fixed as it were to the soil. There are tied to the labour from which they derive their subsistence, and undoubtedly taxation falls more heavily upon them than upon us. If you increase the assessed taxes, or the stamp duties, or the income tax, it does not follow that you will benefit the labourer. Indirect taxation may be more beneficial than direct taxation; but look how many of the articles which enter into the consumption of the poor man are heavily taxed; and then comes the question of bread, the expenditure on which consists of more than one-half of his income. When you say there will be a reduction in the price of corn, and that the danger is there will be some reduction in rent as a consequence, you certainly have no sympathy for those with whom corn constitutes the greater part of their weekly expenses. The noble Lord the Member for Lynn required me to state what was my calculation with respect to the future price of corn. Well, I have repeatedly declined; and I know not how it is possible for any human being to make a calculation with regard to the probable price of corn hereafter. But the noble Lord said, "Well, if you will not answer that question, there is another question which you shall answer, and to which I pin you." In 1835 the price of wheat, on the average of the year, was 39s.; and the noble Lord says, "I insist upon your telling me what would have been the price at which foreign corn might have been imported, supposing there had been no duty upon corn in the year 1835." I say to the noble Lord, I am not prepared to admit that there would have been a reduction in the price of corn; I am not prepared to admit, as a necessary consequence, that if there had been established for some time previously a free trade in corn, there necessarily would have been in the year 1835 a lower price than 39s. That is my answer, which the noble Lord thinks a monstrous one, because the noble Lord has got a list of some few cargoes of corn bought at Dantzic and other places, and brought into this country at a profit for less than 39s. [Lord G. BENTINCK: They were returns which I read.] I do not doubt the accuracy of the return, but I say it is completely beside the question. It is no sort of proof whatever, because in 1835 some cargoes of corn were brought here, having cost at Dantzic 20s., that if you had established a permanently free trade in corn, the price of wheat in this

country would necessarily have been below 39s. I will give the noble Lord my reason for maintaining my proposition in opposition to his. I say there is no arguing from the price of corn upon the Continent in any given year, when the market of this country was not fully and fairly open to importation; and as the noble Lord says he relies upon Parliamentary returns, I also will rely upon Parliamentary returns. You sent Mr. Jacob, a man of great knowledge and great experience with respect to the Corn Law, in 1827, to the Continent to report upon the state of foreign corn, and you find in Mr. Jacob's report this principle laid down. He says:—

"In consequence of your excluding foreign corn by your high duties, there has been an accumulation of corn in many foreign markets."

He then says:—

"It is this accumulation which depresses the agricultural interest, by the exaggerated representation of its amount when we have an abundant harvest, and by the too rapid influx whenever the harvests are deficient."

I cannot think that in the years 1822 and 1823 wheat could have sunk as low as 38s. per quarter, if the ports had been open to foreign grain, and the surplus of continental Europe had been sent to this country as it was required.

"The penning up of wheat (continues Mr. Jacob) in countries of small extent soon creates a glut in such countries, although the quantity really accumulated there may be very minute, and such as, if distributed here, would produce no sensible decline in price. A few thousand quarters of wheat, for instance, in Holstein, Mecklenburgh, or Denmark, for which there was no foreign market, would reduce the price even below the half; the seller must take what is offered, and the reluctant buyer will offer a very low rate. A small sale fixes the price in such cases."

And that is the true state of the case. I apprehend that if you encourage production abroad by the hope of an extravagant price, and a good harvest causes a great accumulation on the Continent, then you will have wheat at a very low price; the needy seller will sell, and the cunning buyer will buy, and there will be profit though the price be very low; and the noble Lord argues that this exception is the universal rule, and that under a free trade, the price of corn will necessarily fall. I differ from the noble Lord, and that is my reason for saying that I am not prepared to admit that if you open the ports, and have a regular dealing in corn with foreign markets, it will necessarily follow that the price of corn will be below 39s. As the noble Lord has referred to returns,

I may also refer to them. The Consuls in the different corn-producing countries were required to state what quantity of corn, of each kind, could be exported to England from the country in which they resided, if the trade in corn was made constantly free at a moderate duty. What is the answer of the Consuls? The general average of price 40s. 6d., free on board. The general average of freight 4s. 9½d. The average, free on board, of wheat, from St. Petersburg, was calculated, by the British Consul, to be 39s. 1d.: freight from 4s. 6d. to 5s. At Dantzic, the price of wheat, in all ordinary years, the ports of England being open, was calculated at 40s, and the price of freight from 3s. 6d. to 4s. I am not including now the prices of landing and shipment in this country. I am only speaking of the average price of wheat and the average freight. The price at Stettin was calculated at 40s., freight from 4s. to 5s.; at Hamburgh, 35s. to 46s., freight from 2s. 6d. to 5s. 6d. Relying, then, upon the opinion of Mr. Jacob, that if you obstruct the trade in corn there will be occasional accumulations and very depressed prices, and that you will have the means of bringing it into the market on account of the accumulation at a low rate, and relying also upon the returns of your own Consuls as to what would be the probable cost of wheat in this country free on board, and the probable freight, provided there was free admission—relying upon these two Parliamentary Returns, the argument of Mr. Jacob, and the facts furnished by the Consuls, I again repeat that I am not prepared to admit that, with a free trade in corn, the price of wheat would be reduced below the 39s. 5d. which it bore in the year 1835. What was the fact? In the year 1822, of which Mr. Jacob speaks, and in the year 1835, you had no foreign import whatever; you had completely excluded foreign corn: it was not foreign competition that depressed your prices; but with full protection you had in 1822 a price of 38s., and in 1835 a price of 39s. There is no pretence for saying that the price of foreign wheat had depressed prices here. In 1822 you moved for a Committee on agricultural distress. It was stated that the agricultural interest was suffering so severely that it was necessary to inquire what remedies could be applied; and, therefore, observe, the complete exclusion of foreign corn does not ensure you either from depression in price, or from severe agricultural distress requiring the appoint-

ment of a Parliamentary Committee. Then, in 1835, the other year to which the noble Lord referred, you had no foreign competition; you had a price of 39s. 1d.; but the depression of price was entirely caused by the abundance of your own harvest. In 1836, following the example of 1822—it being impossible to allege that foreign corn had, in either case, depressed your price or caused your distress—in 1836, as in 1822, a Parliamentary Committee was appointed for the purpose of considering what remedy could be applied to agricultural distress. I have been attempting to show, looking at the population, looking at the bearings of taxation, what immenso masses of people depend for the subsistence of their families upon their weekly earnings—taking those weekly earnings at less than 30s.—what enormous masses there are in this country who so earn their subsistence, and to whom the price of wheat is of the utmost importance in their domestic economy. I have shown you that it constitutes more than one-half of the expenditure in those cases where wheat is consumed; and, I ask you, could you do anything more to benefit the social condition of that class than give them an assurance that they shall have wheat at a moderate price in this country? There might be a great depression in price; but if free trade in corn gives you a guarantee against such low prices as you have had under protection, a guarantee against such high prices as you have also had under protection, would be of inestimable advantage to the working classes. Suppose the price of corn were not depressed below 50s. or below 54s., or any other sum that you can name—if you take a guarantee, by extending the sources and ranges of your supply, that it should not rise to 70s. or 80s., by that act alone you would be conferring an inestimable advantage on the working classes of this country. Surely, no hon. Gentleman can now share in the alarm that, by widening the sources of supply, we shall establish a dependence on foreign countries, because he has shown you that the more you extended the area from which you drew cotton and indigo, the more you reduced the price and equalised the supply. We are about to admit maize and many other articles of subsistence besides wheat. Suppose wheat should fail. If you suppose that foreign countries would enter into a combination not to give us their wheat, still, by the law which we propose, we should have maize to rely upon,

rice to rely upon; and I confess, if the two Tariffs shall pass and receive the sanction of the Legislature, I think it impossible for any one to entertain an apprehension that, by any combination of foreign nations, we shall be in danger of being exposed to an enormous rise in the price of corn. Taking the whole of these measures together, I do not apprehend the existence of any scarcity from a reliance upon an increase of the foreign supply of corn. I have hitherto been referring to the manufacturing class; and I think Gentlemen cannot deny that those who are connected with commerce and manufactures, and who earn their subsistence by their daily labour—I think it cannot be denied that they have a direct and immediate interest in a moderate price of wheat. But it may justly be said, that to their interests the interests of the agricultural classes ought not to be sacrificed. I admit it—I admit it. I think the position of the farmer, the position of the agricultural labourer, ought to be a subject of equal concern at least with that of any other class in the country; and if we could, with truth, say that under a system of protection we had been able to exhibit a prosperous and contented class of agricultural labourers throughout the country, then I should be disposed to acknowledge that you had made out some valid objection to the proposed change. But, can we say, with truth, that throughout this country the position of the agricultural labourers has been such as I have described? [Colonel SIRTHORP: Yes!] The gallant Colonel says "Yes." I say no. And I will now deal with that position—that the rate of wages of the agricultural labourer varies with the price of food. In manufacturing districts, I again say, it is my firm impression that his wages are more likely to vary inversely to the price of food, than directly. I am prepared to contend, and I think to prove, that there is no direct connexion between the wages of the agricultural labourer and the price of wheat. [A MEMBER: Yes!] If there is, then, how do you account to me for this? If the wages of the agricultural labourer vary directly with the price of wheat, why is it that wages are 8s. in Wiltshire, and 13s. in Lincolnshire? Take an agricultural county. I admit that in Lincolnshire wages are about 13s. In Kent too, for some reason or other, wages are high—they are not generally less than 13s. But take the case of those labourers who are most removed from the influence

of manufactures. Take Somersetshire, Dorsetshire, Wiltshire, Cornwall—take Devonshire too. In the first place, I say that as you advance from purely agricultural districts to manufacturing districts, you find the wages of the agricultural labourer increased. But how direct is the sympathy between manufacturing prosperity and agricultural? The fact which you admit is, that in Somersetshire, Dorsetshire, Wiltshire, Devonshire, and those counties of England which are depending upon agriculture, wages are low; and in proportion as you advance to Northamptonshire and the midland counties, and on to Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Yorkshire, and Lancashire, you find the wages of the purely agricultural labourer increase as you approach the manufacturing towns. Is not this a very strong proof that the prosperity of manufactures increases the demand for agricultural produce? But see the position of the agricultural labourer, and see the lesson which we ought to derive from the gradual increase of his wages. Take a purely agricultural county—Dorsetshire, Somersetshire, or other counties in the south-west of England. If there is any direct connexion between the rate of wages and the price of wheat, why are wages in those counties at the existing rate and why are they 13s. or 14s. in the midland counties? Because great skill and industry are employed in the latter districts. That is just what I want to prove. I am trying to show that a country naturally not fertile may be brought into fertility by the use of manure and the application of skill and capital, and that the effect of these is the same as that produced by the approach to a manufacturing town—to raise the wages of the agricultural labourer. I am trying to show that there are two causes of a high rate of wages for the agricultural labourer—the application of skill and capital, as, much to the credit of the agriculturists of Lincolnshire, those means are employed in Lincolnshire, or the approach to a manufacturing town. [Colonel SIRTHORP: They get a remunerating price for their corn.] A remunerating price for their corn! There is as remunerating a price in Wiltshire and Devonshire as in Lincolnshire. In those counties the farmer has equally the protecting duty of 18s.; at present that does not vary, but the rate of wages does. The gallant Colonel must see, without much stress upon his logical faculties, that there is some other cause for the variation of the

wages of the agricultural labourer. Well, but how can we say that, with protection, the position of the agricultural labourer, in a purely agricultural county, is one which we approve of. You know you cannot. Do you not admit to me that in the social condition of the millions in the manufacturing districts, who earn their subsistence by the sweat of their brow, the price of wheat is of the first importance, and has become an object of the deepest interest? Have you read the Reports on the Health of Towns? Are you not deeply convinced that some effort ought to be made to improve the social condition of the masses of the population, who earn their subsistence in the manufacturing towns? It seems to me that the first foundation of any such improvement is, that there should be abundance of food. You may talk of improving the habits of the working classes, introducing education amongst them, purifying their dwellings, improving their cottages; but believe me the first step towards improvement of their social condition is an abundance of food. That lies at the bottom of all. It is in vain, if the people are suffering under scarcity, or if any apprehension of scarcity prevails; the suffering, or the apprehension of it, so depresses the spirits, that it is vain for you to inculcate lessons of cleanliness, or to improve dwellings, until the people are provided with abundance of food. The experience of the last three years, and the experience of the three preceding years, has taught us a lesson which we ought never to forget as to the effects upon the social condition, the moral habits, and the happiness of the working classes, of an abundance of food. Is it possible to resist this conclusion from the observations that have been made? In a purely agricultural district, is it possible to say the rate of wages of the agricultural labourer has any direct connexion with the ratio of the price of wheat? [An hon. MEMBER: Yes!] Well, now I will demonstrate that it has not. Observe, I do not mean to say that there may not be some increase in wages when prices rise. I do not mean to say that when wheat is very high, there is not an occasional increase of wages; but I think I can demonstrate that the rate of wages does not bear any proportion to the increase of price of food. I have here a return, and I will quote no figures which I am not prepared to communicate to any Gentleman connected with the counties to which they refer. They are the best test

of the condition of the labourer, and communicate information which may be relied upon. I will take the variations in the price of wheat from the year 1837 down. I requested to have an account made up from the wages actually paid to agricultural labourers on particular farms from 1837 to 1844 inclusive. I begin then with the wages of agricultural labourers for eight years, from 1837 to 1844 inclusive, in the Sodbury Union, in the county of Gloucester. The labourer received money as well as beer. Here, then, is an account of the wages for the summer and winter weeks. Since 1837, the price of corn has varied very much. Why, in the present year it has varied from 45s. 1d. to 58s. 3d. I will read the price of wheat since 1837:—

In 1837 the price was	53s.	10d.
1838	64s.	7d.
1839	70s.	8d.
1840	66s.	4d.
1841	64s.	4d.
1842	57s.	3d.
1843	50s.	1d.
1844	51s.	2d.

Therefore, the price of wheat had varied from 70s. 8d. to 50s. 1d. within this period of eight years. Now, I dare say you will say, as writers upon political economy have already said, that the ultimate tendency of wages is to accommodate itself to the price of food. I must say that I do not believe it. But I should like to know what consolation it would be to the poor agricultural labourer to be told that the increase in the price of corn would have a tendency to increase his wages in perhaps a period of ten years: What consolation is it to tell him in 1839, that although he paid 70s. 8d. a quarter for his corn, he might be able to purchase it in 1843 for 50s. 1d., when it was likely there would be a close approximation in the amount of his wages within that year? But I do not believe that there is that tendency. I tell you, now, what I think is more natural, namely, a tendency rather to substitute potatoes for wheat among the people of this country. I do not mention this fact with a view of using any acrimonious language in reply to acrimonious observations. I am dealing with matters of the deepest import. The allotment system has been much extolled; the adoption of which has been very extensively recommended from, I admit, the most benevolent motives. Taking individual cases, the possession of small allotments is no doubt of very great advantage to the la-

bourers. I believe that every one admits that within certain limits the greatest advantage would be conferred upon the poorer classes, by the adoption of this system. That it would give them great comfort, independent of the physical advantage that they would derive from it. It would also give him an interest in the soil, a healthful occupation, and by making him a landed proprietor, it would give him great social advantages. But after all, what is the tendency of such a system, if exclusively carried out? Is it not to create a kind of Irish peasantry, by the substitution for their food of potatoes for wheat? You will find that this would be the case—that potatoes would be substituted for wheaten bread. According, then, as this system increases, you will be also increasing the dangers probably of such calamities as the people of Ireland are now suffering under, although, no doubt, in a much more mitigated state. Now, I should think it would be a very great calamity indeed, if we were to see potatoes used here instead of wheat. I believe that the higher the kind of food is which we introduce among the labourers, the security will be the greater for their permanent happiness and contentment. What is the fact? Just in proportion to the depressed condition of the labourers, is there a tendency amongst them to substitute potatoes for wheat. The labourer who has no allotment must depend for his subsistence upon wheat almost exclusively; and, therefore, the greatest proportion of his earnings goes for the purchase of wheat. The possession of an allotment has a tendency, no doubt, to improve immediately the condition of the labourer; but I am only speaking of the danger of carrying this system out to a very great extent, by inducing the substitution of potatoes for wheat. I have read the variations of the price of corn for several years. I will now refer to the variations in the price of labour. I do not mean that these quotations are the total amount of wages, because in harvest time there are always some additional allowances made; but these allowances are made in every year, so that we may strike these additions altogether out of our consideration. In the union to which I have referred, the price of wages averaged in summer 9s. a week, and 1s. for beer. The total average per week, including beer, for winter and summer, was—

In 1837	10s. per week.
1838	11s. "
1839	11s. "

In 1840	11s. per week.
1841	11s. "
1842	11s. "
1843	10s. "
1844	10s. "

so that while the price of wheat varied from 50s. 1d. to 70s. 8d., the price of wages in the same union within a like period varied only from 10s. to 11s. a week. From Blandford, in Dorsetshire, we had this reply:—

"The statement on the other side was given me by four different yeomen. It is only the first-rate labourer that gets 9s. in these parts, unless at piece-work or extra times, and then if the extra hours were reckoned up which the men work at piece-work, I do not think it would average more than 8s. to 9s. with the best men."

Now, at that place the average wages were—

In 1837 the price of wages was 7s. per week.	
1838	8s. "
1839	8s. "
1840	8s. "
1841	8s. "
1842	8s. "
1843	8s. "
1844	8s. "

Therefore, whilst the price of corn had varied from 70s. 8d. to 50s. 1d., it was 48s. 6d. in 1836: wages have only varied from 7s. to 8s. a week. There were extra earnings, such as piece-work, harvesting, &c., as I am aware; but those, for the reason I have given, I do not reckon; they might probably amount to 1s. more each week. That is the statement of one of these yeomen near Blandford. Another farmer states that wages in 1837 were 7s.; in 1838, 7s.; 1839, 8s.; 1840, 8s.; 1841, 8s.; 1842, 8s.; 1843, 8s.; 1844, 8s.—a variation of only 1s. in the rate of wages, notwithstanding the great variation in the price of wheat during the same period. I will take the rate of wages again, in Cornwall: from the Union of Bodmin, a person writes:—

"In reply to your letter of the 8th instant, I beg to state that the rate of wages in this union has not varied from 1837 to 1844. Labourers have been in the habit of receiving 8s. or 9s. per week, during the whole of this period. Those who have had 9s. per week, have been supplied with wheat by their employers at 8s. per imperial bushel, and barley at 4s.; whilst those who have received 8s. per week have had to pay 6s. 8d. for wheat, and 3s. 4d. for barley, whatever may have been the price of grain."

Then from Barnstaple there is this communication:—

"I have inquired of several farmers residing in various parts of this union the amount of agricultural wages during the years 1837 to 1844 inclusive, and have ascertained that, in general, the sum paid was 8s. a week; some few farmers gave

9s.; but a much greater number only 7s. No rise or fall appears to have taken place during the eight years in question, except that in very dear seasons some employers supplied their labourers with corn at a reduced price; but I am inclined to think that they were not very numerous."

I will now take East and West Suffolk; and first, East Suffolk:—

"The variation of wages in this neighbourhood has been from 8s. to 10s. a week from 1835 up to the present time; and within that period the price of flour has varied from 1s. 3d. to 2s. 10d. the stone of 14 lbs.

That is to say, the wages increased one-fifth, while the price of flour had more than doubled. The communication proceeded—

"The supply of labour is greater than the demand in this neighbourhood, and the price of labour is, in fact, what the farmer chooses to give; but he invariably raises his wages and lowers them with the price of corn, though never in the same proportions. Consequently the poor are better off with low than with high prices. You will at once see that 8s. a week with flour at 1s. 3d. is better than 10s. a week with flour at 2s. 10d., supposing the man's family to require from two to three stone of flour weekly."

Now, that is the state of things in East Suffolk. Next I will give you West Suffolk. The writer says—

"The general wages paid by the farmers of this parish have fluctuated from 9s. to 10s. per week; but the men employed at task work, such as thrashing, &c., have earned from 1s. to 2s. per week in addition. The variation in the rate of wages has certainly been caused by the fluctuations in the price of corn; but when wheat was selling at 20s. per coomb"—[a coomb is half an imperial quarter]—"I do not remember that wages were below 9s. per week; and when the farmers were realizing 35s. per coomb, 10s. per week was generally the amount of wages given. The result of my experience is, therefore, to show that although wages fluctuate, in a trifling degree, with the price of corn, they do not rise or fall in proportion to such price, and, therefore, that the labourers are best off when the prices are low."

There are occasionally extraordinary additions made to the labourer's earnings, and in harvest time his earnings are always increased; but these additions apply to all years alike, and therefore I have not reckoned them. Have I not then proved that it is impossible to gainsay that the present generation—the existing race of labourers—cannot be benefited in any way by the slow adjustment between the price of food and the rate of wages? Again, I say, I doubt the position that ultimately even there is any tendency between the two to approximate. But if I have shown that in these eight years—a long period in a labouring man's life—no rise at all in wages has taken place proportionate to the rise in the price of corn, I think I have

shown so far that the rate of wages has no such connexion with the price of food as to rise with them, but rather directly the reverse. I think I have succeeded in demonstrating that the rise in price of wheat operates almost immediately in favour of the agricultural interest. I put this to you in perfect good faith and sincerity. Do you think that you can maintain this system of protection much longer? and, above all things, are you not assured that we cannot maintain the existing law upon the ground of its being advantageous to agriculture? Adam Smith, whose name has been so often mentioned in the course of these discussions, tells his readers, and probably to the satisfaction of every impartial and intelligent man, that the rate of wages depends upon the country being in a prosperous condition. When there is abundance of capital, large profits, an active and healthy condition of agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, then will the rate of wages be high; and when the opposite state of things happens to prevail, then will the rate of wages be in a depressed state, and the working classes reduced to comparative poverty. General prosperity, and not legal enactments, produce a practical effect upon the rates of wages. It is by removing restrictions on manufactures and commerce that you create a demand for labour, and not by raising the price of food. Make the sustenance of mankind difficult of attainment, and you take a guarantee against the rise of wages. But remove restrictions upon agriculture, manufactures, and commerce—pass this measure—and then you at least save yourselves from the necessity and the odium of constant interference for the purpose of regulating the supply of food. And what is it that you relinquish? Well, I could prove to you, by returns from different parts of the country, not such as my right hon. Friend read to you, showing to you the extent of disease and distress, that there has been at least no panic in the price of food. I can adduce instances to you which would demonstrate this—I can point to eleven farms in Roxburgh that have become vacant since this measure was proposed, and in every one of these cases there has been an increase of rent—I can prove to you that enormous prices have been given for land in Scotland, and that where there is great capital and skill, there is no apprehension entertained as to the consequences of this measure. Even in Lincolnshire I can show you that farms

have been let at an increased rent. I might, too, take the different counties, and show you that where there is the most agricultural skill there is the least alarm felt, and there is the greater tendency to take farms at an increased rent. Would you then, I ask, have a law maintained for bad farming and insufficient capital—that for them protection should be permanent; whereas for good farming and competent skill protection should not be required? I ask you, could such a law be justified? It is my firm belief that no general injury would follow from this measure. There may be, of course, individual cases of suffering. There will, and there must be, the suffering of property which is encumbered with tenants having insufficient capital. There may be these individual cases; but it would be most unfair from these to draw an inference against a general law. But, admitting these few cases, let us compare the advantages which you will have in the security against ruinously high prices for food; and there will be to you the advantage and the comfort that you will not be responsible for that high price in times of scarcity of food—that these afflictions will be the results of the operations of nature and not of human laws. Leave trade free, and you will not be held responsible for untoward events over which we have not, and of necessity cannot, exercise any control. Looking, then, at the compensation which this measure furnishes; I do not mean compensation in the way of small equivalents, but, on the contrary, I refer to the security and the permanency of the law—looking to the advantages which the change now proposed must confer upon the labourer—looking to the benefits it will confer upon yourselves; I mean not merely the more obvious advantages likely to arise to your estates, but the less evident effects on the improvement of your position—seeing that you will be elevated by making this concession—I think I am not acting as the enemy of that interest, with which my own is so intimately connected, when I recommend this Bill to the acceptance of the House. I repeat that that which I advise is for the true interests of every class. I ask you, do you feel secure; and if you foresee that the present system cannot long be maintained, why will you not take advantage of a favourable time for effecting a change that very soon must come? You say that the present time is one of prosperity. Is not that a most powerful reason for making this con-

cession? At the present moment you are free agents. An hon. Member said, that there was nothing to apprehend this year nor anything next year. Then you will not go the length of saying that you are safe for more than two years. Can there be a better proof that the present is not an unfavourable moment for effecting the alteration which this measure is intended to accomplish? Again I ask you how long do you think you can maintain the system of protection? I know, and we all know, that it cannot be made permanent consistently with that degree of good will and harmony without which a nation cannot be happy or prosperous. No doubt the immediate cause of this measure is the sad calamity which has befallen Ireland. It has forced upon you the consideration of the corn question. But suppose that you suspended the Corn Laws, what could you have done when the time of suspension was at an end? I have not overlooked the circumstance that, respecting this Bill it has been said to be a good political manoeuvre on my part. The letter of the noble Lord the Member for London, has been described as a good political manoeuvre on his part. Now, I ask what possible advantage can a Bill like this confer upon me as an individual? I know that I have been taunted, and have more than once been told, that my days as a Minister are numbered. But I have introduced this measure, not for the purpose of prolonging my Ministerial existence, but for the purpose of averting a great national calamity, and for the purpose of sustaining a great public interest. I am quite aware of the fact that more than once I have been asked how long I can reckon upon the support of those hon. Gentlemen opposite, without whose votes I could not hope to carry this Bill through the House—how long, in fact, I can reckon upon enjoying their support with respect to other subjects? I know, as well as those who taunt me, that I have not any right to the support or confidence of those hon. Members. I acknowledge, and I admit that acknowledgment with perfect sincerity and plainness, that they have supported me in passing this measure, if it will pass into a law. I do not say this as a private man—I do not on private grounds attach importance to it; but I feel and acknowledge every proper obligation to them as a public man, for the support which they have given to this measure, and for studiously avoiding everything calculated to create embarrassment to its progress;

but then our differences remain the same. I have, Sir, no right to claim their support nor their protection, nor, I will fairly admit, shall I seek it, by departing in the slightest degree from that course which my public duty may urge me to adopt. If this measure pass, our temporary connexion is at an end; but I have not the slightest right to expect support or forbearance from them; still less have I, after the declarations that have been made, a right to expect forbearance or support from this side of the House. Well then, that being the case; it being the fact, that there are but 112 Members to support me, then I may be asked what great measure of national policy I can expect to pursue with these 112 Members, constituting as they do but little more than one-sixth of the House of Commons? I am not, I say, surprised to hear hon. Members predict that my tenure of power is short. But let us pass this measure, and while it is in progress let me request of you to suspend your indignation. This measure being once passed, you on this side and on that side of the House may adopt whatever measures you think proper for the purpose of terminating my political existence. I assure you I deplore the loss of your confidence much more than I shall deplore the loss of political power. The accusations which you prefer against me are on this account harmless, because I feel that they are unjust. Every man has within his own bosom and conscience the scales which determine the real weight of reproach; and if I had acted from any corrupt or unworthy motives, one-tenth part of the accusations you have levelled against me would have been fatal to my peace and my existence. You may think that we took too great precautions against Irish famine in the month of November. You are mistaken. Events will prove that those precautions were not superfluous; but even if they had been, as our motive was to rescue a whole people from the calamity of possible famine, and consequent disease, I should be easy under the accusation. I do not say whether this measure will be effectual for that or not. I speak only of the motive. What weight would your accusation have then even if the precautions be superfluous? I, with the information we had, and the prospects which were before us, repeat the accusation that we took superfluous precautions; and I will reply, as Mr. Burke did, when labouring under similar obloquy, and in circumstances not dissimilar: "In every accident in life,

in pain, in sickness, in depression, in distress, I called to mind that accusation; and was comforted." No, never—no reproach will attach to me even if it be proved that our precautions were superfluous. Before the month of July—[OPPOSITION: May]—it will be established to the conviction of every man, that the precautions we took were not superfluous, and that our motives were not impure. I am not speaking of a temporary measure; I am speaking of a permanent measure. When I do fall, I shall have the satisfaction of reflecting that I do not fall because I have shown subservience to a party. I shall not fall because I preferred the interests of party to the general interests of the community; and I shall carry with me the satisfaction of reflecting, that during the course of my official career, my object has been to mitigate monopoly, to increase the demand for industry, to remove restrictions upon commerce, to equalize the burden of taxation, and to ameliorate the condition of those who labour.

MR. STAFFORD O'BRIEN said, deep as was his respect for the House, and anxious as he was to consult its feeling, he trusted he might be permitted for a short time to make a few remarks on what had fallen from the right hon. Baronet, and to vindicate the position which the party favourable to the principle of protection occupied in that House. The right hon. Baronet said at the close of his speech that if he fell he should fall because during the whole course of his official career he had endeavoured to mitigate monopoly and give a greater degree of freedom to commerce. He thought, skilful as the right hon. Gentleman was in making out his own case, and anxious to vindicate his personal good faith, he had not entirely made out satisfactorily the cause of his fall, and that his statement was not quite so comprehensive as he boasted his measure to be. If he fell, it would not be because, during his long official career, his endeavour had been to mitigate monopoly. He thought the epithet "official" could scarcely be applied to merely the last three years, because, if they looked beyond that, the tale would be totally different. The principle the right hon. Baronet now espoused might be right or wrong; but for the ten years that had preceded the last three years, the labours of the right hon. Baronet had been to construct and build up a party to oppose freedom of trade; and he believed the principles the right hon. Baronet then pro-

fessed were just, and sound, and true. Nobly had the right hon. Baronet laboured, and ably his party had supported him; and when the noble Lord (Russell) had removed to the opposite side of the House, it remained for the right hon. Baronet to earn a still higher name, not only as the successful leader of a party, but as the conductor of a great constitutional body. Whatever his opinion might be as to the fall of the right hon. Baronet, he would never admit that he had stated his case fairly, when he said that during his official career he had laboured to remove the restrictions upon imports. He thought the right hon. Baronet would have acted more fairly if he had given those who were so deeply interested in the question the opportunity of examining the documents he had referred to, and the opportunity also of replying. What did it matter whether they were true or false, when, long before they were able to correct their errors or fallacies, the Motion would have been carried, and, practically speaking, no reply could be given. Many hon. Members had handed him in statements contradictory of those used by the right hon. Baronet; but at that late hour of the night he would not trouble the House with them. Before they went to a division, he was anxious to state their position, and the motives that influenced the party to which he belonged. They had not resorted to the ordinary tactics of Parliamentary opposition. Had it been their wish to move an Address to the Crown praying for a dissolution—had they brought forward a vote of want of confidence, they might have caught some stray votes; but they had taken, as he was sure the hon. Member for Stockport would admit, the more manly and straightforward course. The cause was one of too much importance to be trifled with, and they determined to resort to no trick or artifice whatever. They had brought the question of protection or no protection into the open field, and at least it would be said of them that they had used no disguise, but had met the question fairly. And although they had been deserted by the right hon. Baronet, and had been left to fight the battle themselves, to himself at least there remained the consolation, that the question had roused a spirit of zeal, and energy, and ability; more especially in the younger members who had taken part in the debate on his side, that gave abundant promise of future talent and noble exertion. He hoped and believed that the

spirit, the interest, and the zeal they had hitherto displayed, would not desert them on other occasions. However this question might be decided, they would remember that there were other great questions which would speedily come before them, and that they must try those questions, and take their stand upon them boldly and resolutely, as they had upon that which was now under discussion. Had it not been for the representatives of the agricultural interest, owing to the strange amalgamation of parties which had taken place, this great commercial, political, and social change would have passed through the House without any discussion. But they had determined to discuss it, because they regarded it as a question of magnitude, and as one fraught with danger. The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government said that his sentiments upon the subject had undergone a change; but the House should remember that that change was not from high protective to a modified duty, for the right hon. Baronet had throughout his whole career been engaged in the modification of protective duties, and his party had almost invariably supported him in effecting those modifications: the change had been from modification to an abandonment altogether, and had no reference to anything except a hard rule of political economy. The great difference was this, that whereas in former legislation the interests of the consumer and the producer were alike considered by the Legislature, the right hon. Baronet had now announced that the interests of the consumer alone should find a place in the counsels of this kingdom. In the political economy language of the day the poor were called, not the wealth-consuming, but the wealth-producing classes; and it must be remembered that the principles the right hon. Baronet had enunciated, fairly and legitimately carried out, meant the maximum of labour for the minimum of wages. Therefore he believed that, however fair to show the system might be, its heavy iron hand would speedily be felt by the poor. To his mind the question was not so much one of low prices, as a question which involved the whole system of indirect taxation, which comprised the malt tax and many other taxes. Upon the subject of the failure of the potato crop, as far as his knowledge of Ireland was concerned, he did not think that the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had exaggerated the state of that

part of the United Kingdom. And he would tell the right hon. Gentleman something which, without party feeling, he would, no doubt, approve of: it was, that the very moment he could get away from those discussions he intended going to Ireland, for the purpose of seeing what he could do in his own neighbourhood for alleviating the condition of the people. But whilst he said this, he must observe that he thought the question, as far as Ireland was concerned, had nothing, and could not have anything to do with the measure before the House. They might think of this assertion as badly as they pleased; but in his conscience he did not believe that as a temporary remedy it would be the means of adding one stone of meal to the food of the poor of Ireland. Allusion had been made by the right hon. Baronet to the fact that the legislation of this country had been mainly entrusted to the landed interest. But let that legislation be tried by the best of all standards, the history of this great Empire. Let it be compared for the same number of years with any other Empire that ever existed. Try an honest standard like that, and then they must own that if they were resolved on a change from landlords' legislation to commercial and manufacturing legislation, the landlords of England had a right to look them in the face and say, "Take back, if you choose, the trust reposed in us, but at least admit that we have not betrayed it." It was very easy to attribute the evils and difficulties to be found to the existence of any one law, or the predominance of any particular class; but this was a narrow and a prejudiced view, which could be taken by such only as looked at the dark side of things. The land had been the basis of our Legislature, as he thought wisely and properly, because it checked and elevated the mere spirit of barter and of commerce. It was that to which they owed, far more than they were willing to allow, and far more than they were grateful for, or conscious of, the prosperity this country now enjoyed, and the power which was now wielded against the agricultural interest. He contended, therefore, that before they perilled such a venture as the present, they should produce ample and conclusive reason for convincing the House of its necessity. They had been furnished with no statistics, and the Ministry had refused to tell them the price of their own corn. [*Cheers.*] He understood that cheer;

he knew how fond hon. Members on that side of the House were, whenever an allusion was made to money by the supporters of the agricultural interest, of assuming that all their interest in the question was attributable to mercenary motives. He could not but remember, however, how eager the hon. and smiling Member for Durham was, when it came to a question of 1*d.* a pound on a certain kind of wool. So eager was he for the proposed change in the alphabetic Tariff on that occasion, notwithstanding the sublimity of his sentiments, that he blamed the right hon. Baronet because wool did not begin with a C. But no man knew better than the hon. Member for Stockport that in discussing questions of price, like this, they were led into the discussion of great and important principles. They knew that when a Government, pledged to protection, came forward and proposed—not that they should reconsider the case, not that they would show by argument, by calculation, and returns from foreign parts, the possibility of struggling with the agriculture of other countries—but without entering into any such calculations, suddenly proposed to destroy a great system, then the advocates of the existing system were justified in asserting that the Government might be right or they might be wrong; but they showed practically, although they denied it in words, that they did not give that value, importance, and predominance to the agriculture of this country which their fathers before them had given, and the result of which was the prosperity which this country now enjoyed. But although the Legislature were about to leave them to struggle with strangers, who might become, they knew not how soon, enemies, they would not part in anger or indignation; and he believed that if their own experience should hereafter tell them that to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest, was not the way to make a people happy, and an empire great, they would not be the less disposed to reconsider the decision which they were about to pronounce to night, because, when they should affirm that decision, some should be found among them loudly protesting against it, and earnestly resisting it—because some should be found among them determined to uphold, against a combination of official power, debating ability, and numbers unparalleled in Parliamentary history, the principles in the advocacy of which they had

entered public life, and to do battle to the last for that which they believed to be the true interests of the country.

VISCOUNT PALMERSTON: Sir, I am anxious to state as shortly as I can to the House, the view which I take of the two questions which have formed the subject of our debate; both of great, though not of equal importance; the one commercial, the other constitutional; the one arising out of the measures of the Government, the other out of their conduct; the one being the question, whether the Corn Laws shall be repealed, and the principle of competition shall be substituted for the principle of protection as the foundation of our commercial system: the other being the question, whether the Members of the Government have or have not been justified in departing from certain engagements, which they are alleged to have contracted towards the Conservative party. The latter question, though the least important of the two, is still deserving the consideration of this House, and of the country. For the political character of public men is public property, and that which concerns it, must always be a matter of public interest. Now, the Government having this year proposed measures, at variance, not so much with their formerly expressed opinions, as with their former practical course, a large section of their political supporters, not content with condemning these measures as injurious, not content with declaring that the Government have thereby lost their confidence and forfeited their support, charge the Members of the Government with having deserted and betrayed their followers. I cannot acquiesce in the constitutional doctrine which is implied in that charge. For I have heard many Gentlemen belonging to the protectionist section of the House acknowledge that the Government had been actuated in the course which they have pursued by sincere conviction, and by a conscientious sense of public duty; and that they had nothing in a political point of view to gain, but on the contrary, much to lose, by the course they have taken. Well, then, the charge which I have adverted to, implies that public men ought to consider party engagements as a more binding obligation than public duty: now with this I cannot agree. I hold as high as any man can do, the importance and necessity of party association for the useful working of representative Government: I hold that a mem-

ber of a political party should in his personal relations be true and faithful to his associates, and that in his political relations he ought to give up smaller differences of opinion in order to obtain common action for the promotion of common principles of Government. But when any man, be he leader or be he follower, finds himself in such a situation, that public duty points one way, and party engagements another, however great the sacrifice to be made, however painful the severance from private friends, however inconvenient the separation from political associates; he ought to stand by his country. I think, however, the Government have placed upon somewhat too narrow a ground their justification of the change which has taken place in their conduct. They have put it upon their experience of the last three years; they might more justly have ascribed it to the debates of the last four Sessions. They say it is their observation of the working of their own Tariff, that has wrought the change; I suspect it is much more the speeches of my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden), and of other Gentlemen on this side of the House, who, Session after Session, have enforced the doctrines of free trade with unanswerable arguments and irresistible eloquence. It is all very well for Gentlemen who sit listlessly through a debate, thinking only of the vote they mean to give in the division, or who perhaps, without hearing a syllable of the discussion, come down at the eleventh hour to record in the lobby, with all the triumph of consistency, their unaltered and unalterable opinions,—it is all very well for them to boast that they maintain without change, Session after Session, and year after year, the very same opinions with which they originally set out; but very different is the case of responsible Ministers of the Crown, compelled by their duty to sit out the whole of each night's debate, to listen with deep attention to every speech, and, what is more to the purpose, to find answers—ay, and answers which, as men of sense and station, they shall not be ashamed to use. So far, then, from wondering that the Government have at length changed their opinions and their course, I am only astonished that they did not do so long ago. And I must say that this consideration gives me great hopes even of those Gentlemen of the protection party who have most stoutly resisted the present

measures. For they have now undertaken to furnish speeches as well as votes; and if they will permit me to pay them a most deserved compliment, I must say, in passing, that we have all admired the great ability of their speeches, and that every Englishman must feel proud of the talent and cultivation of mind which have been exhibited by them, and especially by some among them who have not had the advantage which practice in debates gives to persons in explaining their sentiments in this House. But really, after witnessing the powers of mind which many of those hon. Gentlemen have evinced, I cannot help entertaining a hope that when, upon mature consideration, they come to weigh in the balance of their judgment the arguments they have encountered, and the arguments they have used in reply, their opinions may, perhaps, at no distant period, undergo some considerable change. At any rate, I will venture to foretell one thing, and that is, that if the course of events should place them on the Ministerial benches, they will not sit long there without material alterations of some of their present opinions. There are certain climates which are specific cures for certain diseases; and depend upon it if you take any men who are labouring under the protection fever even in its most acute and inflammatory type, and only place them for a few months in the free-trade atmosphere of Downing-street, you will effect an entire and permanent cure. Now as to the commercial question. Having taken the liberty, some years ago, of expressing in this House a wish that the word protection might be blotted out of our commercial vocabulary, I cannot but hail with cordial pleasure the proposal of measures which tend so greatly to realize that wish. Protection is no doubt a plausible word. But many are the evils which mankind have endured from plausible words eloaking and disguising injurious things. What does protection, in the commercial sense, mean? Why, injury to the many for the benefit of the few; with this difference, however, that the injury to the many is real, while the benefit to the few is for the most part delusive. Protection is manifestly injurious to the many, because its avowed object and necessary effect is to shut out the foreign supply of commodities which the many consume, and thus to render those commodities dearer, and moreover, as I will presently show, worse than they otherwise would be. At first sight, indeed, this

injury to the consumers, who are the many, would appear to be attended with benefit to the home producers, who are the few, by reason of the monopoly which is thus secured to the latter in the home market. But no real benefit can be conferred on any set of men by any order of things which does not stimulate them to exert to the utmost their industry, ingenuity, intelligence, and activity. But protection, by its baneful influence, paralyses the vital energies of human industry, cramps its development, and cripples its growth; and thus, so far from benefiting the persons for whose advantage it is intended, it often brings them into a worse condition than they would have been if they had been thrown, without protection, upon their own resources. I say, then, that protection, being injurious to the many, even if it were advantageous to the few, would be at variance with that fundamental maxim which bids us legislate for the many, and not for the few; but being, as it is, injurious to the many, and not even advantageous to the few, there is not the shadow of an excuse to be set up in its defence. But it is contended that free trade and the absence of protection may do very well for a country in a natural state of society, but that we are in an artificial condition; that we have large naval and military establishments to maintain; a great debt, the interest of which we must pay; that for these purposes we must raise a large revenue by heavy taxation; and that, in these circumstances, we cannot afford to part with the system of protection for native industry. Now, I hold that to be a complete fallacy. I hold it not only to be untrue, but to be the very reverse of truth. For what is the effect of protection? Why, that by laying an unduly heavy tax upon commodities coming from abroad, you greatly lessen the supply of those articles, and thus raise artificially the supply of all like articles produced at home; while, at the same time, by exempting the British producers from the stimulus which would result from foreign competition, you lower artificially the quality of the things thus produced at home. But are our establishments, and our debt, and our revenue, a reason why we should do this? If we are compelled to take from every man in the country a large portion of his yearly income to supply the demands of the public service, is that a reason why we should, by artificial means, purposely make everything which he wants to buy with the remaining part of his in-

come, as dear and as bad as we can? I say, on the contrary, that if we are obliged to call upon all classes to make for the public service a sacrifice of a large portion of their incomes, whether arising from lands or from funds, from commerce, from professions, or from labour, that very fact is the strongest possible reason why we should endeavour to enable them to make that remainder which we leave to them go as far as it possibly can in procuring for them, according to their respective stations in life, the necessities, the conveniences, or the luxuries which they may wish to enjoy. I contend, therefore, that it is precisely because we have great establishments, because we have a heavy debt, and because we must have a large revenue, that we cannot afford to keep up the system of protection. Well, but then, is the state of our commercial relations with foreign countries a reason why we should maintain this system of protection? Some people say it is. Some Gentlemen argue that free trade might do very well if it was practised by all nations, but that one-sided free trade will not do; that our example will not be followed; and that this system, not being mutual and reciprocal, will be an injury to ourselves and an advantage to other nations. Now, I hold this to be just as great a fallacy as the other. For what is the effect of mutually hostile tariffs between ourselves and other countries? Take any foreign country—take France, for instance. The high tariffs of France and of England are alike injurious to both countries. Our high tariff against French commodities is an injury to ourselves as consumers, and to the French as producers; while the high tariff of France against British commodities is an injury to the French consumers as well as to the English producers. Here, then, is an inconvenience on each side of the water. We cannot, however, persuade the French to reduce their tariff, but we have the power of reducing our own; but we are told that we ought not to do so unless the French agree to a simultaneous reduction on their side. Why, what is that but saying, that we are to continue to submit to an evil which we have the power to put an end to, because, forsooth, another country chooses to continue to subject us and themselves to another evil of a similar kind, which is beyond our control. What sense is there in this? Surely, if we cannot get rid of both evils, at least let us free ourselves from the one which we are able to remove. And this leads me to say, that I have

heard with great pleasure the announcement of the Government, that they have at last come to the conviction that negotiations with Foreign Powers for mutual reduction of tariffs are no longer worth pursuing; and that it is better to act upon a bolder policy, and to carry our own principles voluntarily into practice. I think, however, that the Government were right in pursuing those negotiations, and that former Governments were right in making similar attempts. It was paying a due and proper deference to the prejudices of this country; and if we had succeeded in accomplishing our purpose, we should have gained two advantages at once; we should have got rid of the obstacles abroad, at the same time that we removed the obstacles at home. But there was this inconvenience attending that course, that foreign countries misunderstood the real nature of the propositions which we made to them. The real meaning and substance of our offer was, that we would relieve ourselves and them from an inconvenience on our side of the water, if they would relieve themselves and us from a similar inconvenience on their side. If our offers had been thus rightly understood they must have been accepted. But they were misconstrued. They were looked upon as a proffered bargain. Foreign countries, like many persons here, regarded protection as a good, and free trade as an evil; and, therefore, they regarded a reduction of prohibitory and protecting duties as an injury to the country by which such reduction might be made. Thus they understood us to say, that we would by a reduction of our Tariff do ourselves an injury and confer upon them a benefit, provided that they on their side would, by a corresponding reduction of their tariff, inflict an equal injury upon themselves, and confer an equal benefit upon us. Here, then, arose a question as to the relative value of proposed equivalents; and foreign Governments, considering the matter as a bargain, were always too much afraid of our overreaching them, or too much intent upon overreaching us. Then came the local struggle of protected classes, fiercely resisting any infringement of their monopolies; and thus it happened, both in our time and in that of the present Ministers, that even when foreign Governments were sufficiently enlightened to wish to come to terms with us, they had not the power to do so. Our example is much more likely to be effectual than our negotiations. When foreign countries see that we reduce

our duties upon their commodities, not as the condition of a bargain, and in exchange for an equivalent, but spontaneously and for our own advantage; not as a favour to them, but as a benefit to ourselves; and when they see, as they surely will, in the good result of our measures, a convincing proof of the truth of the doctrines upon which they are founded, may we not expect that our example will be followed, and that other countries will endeavour to secure to themselves the same benefits which we shall thus have obtained? Well, then, Sir, assuming, without further argument, for at this late hour I am anxious to shorten, as much as possible, anything I may have to say—assuming, then, that the operation of the principle of competition and the abolition of protection are good for every other branch of our commerce, still the question arises, are they equally good for the trade in corn; or are there any peculiar circumstances connected with agricultural productions which ought to make such productions an exception to the general rule? I hold that there is no ground for such an exception, and that there is no reason why freedom of trade in corn should not be as advantageous to the country as freedom of trade in every other commodity. But by free trade I do not mean, necessarily and in all cases, trade free from custom duties. We are obliged, as I have already said, to raise a large yearly revenue; and we must, for that purpose, have heavy taxes. The least inconvenient and least objectionable method of raising a large portion of that revenue is by indirect taxation, and that involves the necessity of custom duties. Therefore, when I speak of free trade I mean trade free from duties laid on for the purpose of prevention or obstruction, but not trade free from duties laid on for the purpose of revenue, and which, in order to accomplish their purpose, must be so moderate as not to cripple or impede commercial transactions. Now, my opinion has been, and, I own, still continues to be, that there is no reason why the trade in corn should, in this respect, be an exception to the general rule. I am for a moderate fixed duty. My noble and hon. Friends near me have also been of the same opinion; and, allow me to say, that this opinion was not taken up by us, as stated last night by the noble Lord the Member for Lynn, when the late Government was, as he said, in *articulo mortis*; but, as far back as 1839, when there was no reason to expect an early

termination of our official career. I say then that my wish would have been to have had a low fixed duty on the importation of corn. I think that a duty of 4s. or 5s. would not sensibly raise the price of corn in this country; it would be felt by nobody; it would produce a revenue not undeserving of consideration; and what is of more importance, it would enable us to accomplish a great transition with less violence to the feelings and prejudices of a large class of men. But, in this House, men must consider what they can have, and not what they would wish to have. Now, the Government have all along declared, that a fixed duty is the one thing which they never will either propose or agree to. My noble and hon. Friends near me have lately abandoned a fixed duty in despair. The Gentlemen of the Anti-Corn-Law League declare that nothing will satisfy them but a total and entire abolition of all duties on the importation of corn; and as to the Gentlemen who are in favour of protection, the moment that a fixed duty is proposed in this House, they jump up in a body, and rush in a crowd to the door. A fixed duty, therefore, is out of the question; and our only choice lies between the sliding scale and an entire abolition of duty; and, having to decide between these alternatives, I cannot for a moment hesitate to vote for entire abolition. Now, let us for a moment examine how this measure, if carried, will affect the various classes of society which are concerned in the cultivation of corn; and first, as to the labourer. It has been said that this measure will injure the labourer, because by diminishing the average price of corn, it will lower his wages, and by throwing land out of cultivation, it will lessen his employment. Now, as to the first point, the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government has just shown, by a detailed statement of wages and prices at various times and places, that wages do not fluctuate with the price of corn. But it is indeed a well-known and generally-admitted fact, that the price of labour, that is to say, wages, must vary like the price of every other commodity, according to the relative proportions of demand and supply. If you want a proof of this, look to the United States of America, where the price of corn being low, but the supply of labour being much less than the demand, wages are high; look again to the southern counties of England and to Ireland, and there you will find the price of corn comparatively

high, but the supply of labour being greater than the demand, wages are low; then turn to the northern counties of England, and there you will see the price of corn not much higher than in the southern counties, but the demand for labour in the manufactures extends its influence upon agriculture, and there the wages of the agricultural labourer are much higher than in the counties to the south. It is, then, a complete fallacy to suppose that if this measure should diminish the price of corn it would lower wages; but if it did diminish the price of corn without lowering wages, it would benefit the labourer; for either he would thus be enabled to procure more food for himself and his family, or if he chose to be content with the same amount of food, he would be able to buy a greater quantity of other articles, which are essential to his comfort and convenience. But then it is said that the passing of this measure would diminish the employment of the agricultural labourer, by throwing land out of cultivation. It could not do so, unless it reduced excessively the price of corn; and there can be no difficulty in showing how unlikely it is that any such result should follow. It seems to me, therefore, that the fear that land will, by this measure, be thrown out of cultivation, is altogether visionary. But am I the only person who holds that opinion? Why, Commissioners have been appointed under the General Inclosure Act which passed last Session; they have lately made a Report, which has been laid before this House, and by that Report it appears that they have already received forty-six applications for inclosures, amounting in all to 28,000 acres; and that twenty-seven of these applications have been made since the beginning of December last; and, therefore, since it was publicly known that a proposal would be made to Parliament for the repeal of the Corn Laws. This does not look like land being thrown out of cultivation. But more than this: we have a Bill before this House which shows that there are some bold adventurers who actually intend to wrest 40,000 acres from the waves of the German Ocean, and add them to the cultivated service of this our solid island. I think then I am entitled to say that if I am of opinion that this measure will not throw land out of cultivation, there are others fully as competent to judge of this matter, who concur with me in that opinion. Now as to the tenant farmer; I contend that he has no material interest in

this question. If the average price of corn should not fall much lower than it has been, he will be no loser. But if the average price should fall in any considerable degree, he has two resources. First, he may increase the quantity and quality of his produce by improved methods of husbandry; by applying to his pursuits greater science, greater skill, and greater economy; and everybody knows that the agriculture of this country is not susceptible of great improvement in all these respects. In this way the tenant farmer might make up for a diminution of price, by an increase of produce. But if the worst came to the worst, he would have the other resource of going to his landlord for a reduction of rent; and as it could never be the interest of the owners of land to ruin their tenants by enforcing contracts no longer suited to existing circumstances, the landlords would of course consent to an equitable rearrangement of the terms between them and their tenants. This, then, is not a labourers' question; it is not a tenant farmers' question; it is purely and simply a question affecting the owners of land; and I do not think that even they will suffer by the change. They can suffer only if the quantity of corn brought in should be so great as very materially to lower prices, and in that way to diminish rents. But what is the probability in that respect? Where is at present that immense quantity of superfluous corn, which is to come in like a deluge and to beat down the prices in this country? Does any man suppose that the people of other countries go on producing from year to year commodities for which they have no sale? The quantity of corn grown yearly in the world is proportioned to the probable demand of the market of the world, in which market we but seldom appear as buyers. The surplus quantity now, or from time to time, in existence, is merely the superfluity of abundant seasons held for a time in store to meet the alternate deficiency of bad years. Till the bad years come, that corn is cheap, because it is a supply exceeding the demand; but the moment we go into the foreign market as buyers, to purchase up this surplus, prices abroad will rise. Not only will the British demand, as a new competition with foreign demand, naturally cause a rise of price, but our own merchants will compete against each other, until by a rise of prices abroad the profit of their importations shall have been brought down to the usual rate of

mereantile profit upon capital employed in other ways. There is, therefore, very little probability that the importation of the existing surplus quantity of corn in foreign markets will materially lower prices in this country. But then, is the quantity of corn produced abroad susceptible of great or unlimited increase? Why, increased production abroad can be accomplished only by increased application of capital, that is, by additional expenses of various kinds; and these fresh expenses will tend to increase the cost of production, and, consequently, to raise the price of foreign corn. Moreover, the new lands to be brought into cultivation for these purposes will, probably, be further from the ports of embarkation, and the expense of internal conveyance will thus also be increased. But the consumption of foreign countries is not remaining stationary, and their population is annually increasing as well as our own; and, therefore, a considerable portion of their increased produce will be kept at home for their own use. And with regard to this, let it be borne in mind that the increase in the population of almost all countries is more in the food-consuming than in the food-producing classes; more in the inhabitants of towns and cities, than in the cultivators of the soil. There is no country with regard to which this is more true than the United States of America. There, no doubt, cultivation is spreading; but its advance scarcely keeps pace with the multiplication of new cities constantly springing up in the interior, or with the rapid augmentation of the population of the older cities in the long-established states. There are, therefore, many causes which tend to limit the additional supply of corn which we can draw from abroad, and which must raise the cost price of corn which we may so import. But are there no causes in operation at home which will also contribute to make this foreign corn annually dearer? Is our own population stationary? Does that not increase at the rate of from 300,000 to 400,000 every year? And will not this annual increase of the consumers in this country absorb a considerable portion of the increased annual supply from abroad? But is that all? Does any one imagine that the poorer classes in this country consume, at present, as much food as they would do if food were cheaper, and more within their reach? It is well known that they do not. Well, then, suppose that by a large importation

from abroad the price of food should be materially diminished, what would be the immediate consequence? Why the consumption of food by many millions of the poorer classes would immediately increase; their increased consumption would raise prices again; and the probability is that the effect of a very large importation of foreign corn would only be, to enable the poorer classes to consume a much larger quantity of food at the present prices; whereas, if such increased consumption were to be attempted by them without a corresponding increase of supply, prices would soon rise to such a height as to compel them to give up the attempt. It seems to me, therefore, that the apprehensions felt by the landowners that this measure will greatly reduce the price of corn, and by that means materially lower their rents, are altogether unfounded, and that they have no good reason, on that score, to object to this measure. But, on the other hand, if those apprehensions are well founded, then, still less ought the landowners to object to the measure; for what is an objection founded upon such grounds, but a confession that their rents are artificially raised by means of a law which enhances to the poorer classes of this country the cost of the necessities of life? The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, on a former occasion, gave to the British aristocracy the appellation of proud. He called them a proud aristocracy. I thought the appellation well chosen and appropriate; and it seemed to me neither to deserve animadversion nor to require withdrawal. The British aristocracy are proud; they have a right to be proud; they ought to be proud; and proud, I trust, they will long continue to be. They have a right to be proud of the noble deeds and great public services performed by their illustrious forefathers; they have a right to be proud of their own high and ennobling qualities; they have a right to be proud of the affection, the esteem, and the respect felt for them by their fellow countrymen. But will the proud aristocracy of England contend for the continuance of a law, under which they are liable to have it cast in their teeth, that they derive a portion of their income from a poor rate—and a rate too, not levied on the wealthy for the support of the indigent poor; but raised for the benefit of the rich, and wrung from the necessities of the poorest of the poor? Will the proud aristocracy of England contend for the continuance of a law, under which

the toil-worn peasant or the drooping artisan, when dividing among his craving children the insufficient meal which he has purchased with the hard-earned wages of his exhausting labour, must inwardly repine to think, that each scanty morsel is rendered scantier still than it might otherwise have been, in order that the painful retrenchments of his "humble shed" may go to swell the luxurious superfluities of "some contiguous palace?" If we cannot convince the reason of the British aristocracy; if we appeal in vain to their justice; if, which I never will believe, their generosity is dead; let us at least awaken their pride; that manly and honourable pride, which, founded on the judgment of a self-approving conscience, secures to man his own respect, and commands for him the respect of others. It has been shown that the measures now proposed will increase the commerce of this country, and will by this means add to its wealth, and augment its general prosperity. But with these advantages will follow another of still greater importance;—for in proportion as we increase our commercial relations with other countries, we multiply the chances of the preservation of peace. If, for the sake of preserving peace, we make weak concessions and timid submissions, we fail in accomplishing our purpose. We stave off indeed our difficulties for the moment, but they soon come back upon us again with increased embarrassment and aggravated pressure, and we find that we have—

"purchased dear

Short intermission, bought with double smart."

But far otherwise is it when, by extending commercial intercourse, we give to other nations interests in the maintenance of peace, equal to, and identical with our own. If monarchs are ambitious and grasping, or if democracies are encroaching and aggressive, and you wish to bind them down to keep the peace—fetter them with commerce: or, if you want to inspire their minds with juster and more moderate sentiments, spread wide before them the book of the merchant; and be assured that in the pages of that volume, they will see more cogent and conclusive arguments against unjust and unnecessary war, than are to be found in the purest precepts of the moralist, or in the wisest exhortations of the statesman. Upon these grounds, therefore, I give this measure my hearty support. I support it, because I think it calculated to promote the welfare, the com-

fort, the happiness, and the prosperity of this country; and because it seems to me to be founded on principles which tend to secure to mankind that great and inestimable blessing, the continuance of international peace.

The House then divided on the Question, that the word "now" stand part of the Question:—Ayes 302; Noes 214: Majority 88.

List of the AYES.

Acheson, Visct.	Clive, hon. R. H.
Acland, T. D.	Cobden, R.
A'Court, Capt.	Cochrane, A.
Agliouby, H. A.	Cockburn, rt. hon. Sir G.
Ainsworth, P.	Colebrooke, Sir T. E.
Aldam, W.	Collett, J.
Anson, hon. Col.	Collins, W.
Attwood, J.	Corry, rt. hon. H.
Baillie, Col.	Cowper, hon. W. F.
Baillie, H. J.	Craig, W. G.
Baine, W.	Crawford, W. S.
Baird, W.	Cripps, W.
Baldwin, B.	Currie, R.
Bannerman, A.	Carter, H. B.
Barelay, D.	Dalmey, Lord
Baring, rt. hn. P. T.	Dalrymple, Capt.
Baring, rt. hon. W. B.	Dashwood, G. H.
Barkly, H.	Dennison, J. E.
Barnard, E. G.	Dennistoun, J.
Beckett, W.	D'Eyncourt, rt. hon. C. T.
Benbow, J.	Dickinson, F. H.
Berkeley, hon. C.	Divett, E.
Berkeley, hon. Capt.	Douglas, Sir C. E.
Berkeley, hon. H. P.	Douro, Marq. of
Bernal, R.	Drummond, H. H.
Blake, M. J.	Dugdale, W. S.
Blewitt, R. J.	Duke, Sir J.
Bodkin, W. H.	Duncan, Visct.
Botfield, B.	Duncan, G.
Bouverie, hon. E. P.	Duncannon, Visct.
Bowes, J.	Duncombe, T.
Bowles, Adm.	Dundas, Adm.
Bowring, Dr.	Dundas, D.
Bridgeman, H.	Easthope, Sir J.
Bright, J.	Eastnor, Visct.
Brocklehurst, J.	Ebrington, Visct.
Brotherton, J.	Egerton, W. T.
Browne, R. D.	Ellice, rt. hon. E.
Browne, hon. W.	Ellice, E.
Bruce, Lord E.	Ellis, W.
Buckley, E.	Elphinstone, H.
Buller, C.	Escott, B.
Buller, E.	Estcourt, T. G. B.
Busfield, W.	Etwall, R.
Butler, P. S.	Evans, W.
Byng, G.	Evans, Sir De L.
Byng, rt. hon. G. S.	Ewart, W.
Cardwell, E.	Feilden, W.
Carew, hon. R. S.	Ferguson, Col.
Carnegie, hon. Capt.	Fitzgerald, R. A.
Cavendish, hon. C. C.	Fitzroy, hon. H.
Cavendish, hon. G. H.	Fitzroy, Lord C.
Chapman, B.	Fitzwilliam, hon. G. W.
Chichester, Lord J. L.	Fleetwood, Sir P. H.
Childers, J. W.	Flower, Sir J.
Christie, W. D.	Forster, M.
Clay, Sir W.	Fox, C. R.
Clerk, rt. hon. Sir G.	Gibson, T. M.

Gill, T.
Gisborne, T.
Glynne, Sir S. R.
Gore, M.
Gore, hon. R.
Goulburn, rt. hon. H.
Graham, rt. hon. Sir J.
Granger, T. C.
Greene, T.
Grey, rt. hon. Sir G.
Grimsditch, T.
Grosvenor, Lord R.
Guest, Sir J.
Hall, Sir B.
Hamilton, W. J.
Hamilton, Lord C.
Hammer, Sir J.
Hastie, A.
Hatton, Capt. V.
Hawes, B.
Hay, Sir A. L.
Hayter, W. G.
Heathcoat, J.
Herbert, rt. hon. S.
Hervey, Lord A.
Hill, Lord M.
Hindley, C.
Hobhouse, rt. hon. Sir J.
Hogg, J. W.
Holland, R.
Hope, G. W.
Hornby, J.
Horsman, E.
Howard, hon. C. W. G.
Howard, hon. E. G. G.
Howard, P. H.
Howard, Sir R.
Hughes, W. B.
Ilume, J.
Humphery, Ald.
Hutt, W.
James, Sir W. C.
Jermyn, Earl
Jocelyn, Visct.
Johnstone, Sir J.
Johnstone, H.
Kelly, Sir F.
Kelly, J.
Kirk, P.
Labouchere, rt. hon. H.
Lambton, H.
Langston, J. H.
Lascelles, hon. W. S.
Layard, Capt.
Legh, G. C.
Lemon, Sir C.
Loch, J.
Lockhart, A. E.
Lyall, G.
Macaulay, rt. hon. T. B.
Mackinnon, W. A.
Macnamara, Major
McCarthy, A.
McGeachy, P. A.
McNeill, D.
McTaggart, Sir J.
Mahon, Visct.
Mainwaring, T.
Mangles, R. D.
Marjoribanks, S.
Marshall, W.
Marstrand, H.
Martin, J.

Martyn, C. W.
Masterman, J.
Matheson, J.
Maule, rt. hon. F.
Meynell, Capt.
Milnes, R. M.
Mitcalfe, H.
Mitchell, T. A.
Moffatt, G.
Molesworth, Sir W.
Morpeth, Visct.
Morris, D.
Morrison, Gen.
Morrison, J.
Mostyn, hon. E. M. L.
Muntz, G. F.
Napier, Sir C.
Neville, R.
O'Brien, J.
O'Brien, T.
O'Connell, J.
Ord, W.
Osborne, R.
Oswald, J.
Owen, Sir J.
Paget, Col.
Paget, Lord W.
Paget, Lord A.
Palmerston, Visct.
Parker, J.
Patten, J. W.
Pattison, J.
Peell, Capt.
Peel, rt. hon. Sir R.
Peel, J.
Pendarves, E. W. W.
Pennant, hon. Col.
Phillips, G. R.
Phillipotts, J.
Plumbridge, Capt.
Powell, C.
Price, Sir R.
Protheroe, E.
Pulsford, R.
Rawdon, Col.
Reid, Sir J. R.
Reid, Col.
Rosa, D. R.
Rambold, C. E.
Russell, Lord J.
Russell, Lord E.
Russell, J. D. W.
Ratherford, A.
Sandon, Visct.
Scott, R.
Scrope, G. P.
Seymour, Lord
Seymour, Sir H. B.
Smith, B.
Smith, J. A.
Smith, rt. hon. R. V.
Smythe, hon. G.
Somers, J. P.
Somerset, Lord G.
Somerville, Sir W. M.
Stansfield, W. R. C.
Stanton, W. H.
Staunton, Sir G. T.
Stewart, P. M.
Stewart, J.
Stuart, Lord J.
Stuart, H.
Strickland, Sir G.

Strutt, E.
Sutton, hon: H. M.
Tancred, H. W.
Thesiger, Sir F.
Thornely, T.
Tollemache, hon. F. J.
Tomline, G.
Towneley, J.
Traill, G.
Trelawny, J. S.
Trench, Sir P. W.
Troubridge, Sir E. T.
Tufnell, H.
Turner, E.
Vane, Lord H.
Vernon, G. H.
Villiers, hon. C.
Villiers, Visct.
Vivian, J. H.
Vivian, hon. Capt.
Wakley, T.
Walker, R.

Wall, C. B.
Warburton, H.
Ward, H. G.
Watson, W. H.
Wawn, J. T.
Wellesley, Lord C.
White, S.
Williams, W.
Wilshire, W.
Winnington, Sir T. E.
Wood, C.
Wood, Col.
Wood, Col. T.
Wortley, hon. J. S.
Wrightson, W. B.
Wynn, rt. hon. C. W. W.
Wyse, T.
Yorke, H. R.

TELLERS.

Young, R.
Baring, H.

List of the NOES.

Acland, Sir T. D.
Adare, Visct.
Adderley, C. B.
Alford, Visct.
Allix, J. P.
Antrobus, E.
Arbuthnott, hon. H.
Archbold, R.
Arkwright, G.
Astell, W.
Austin, Col.
Bagge, W.
Bagot, hon. W.
Bailey, J.
Bailey, J., jan.
Baillie, W.
Bankes, G.
Baring, T.
Barrington, Visct.
Baskerville, T. B. M.
Bateson, T.
Bell, M.
Bennett, J.
Bennet, P.
Bentinck, Lord G.
Bentinck, Lord H.
Blackburne, J. I.
Blackstone, W. S.
Blakemore, R.
Boldero, H. G.
Borthwick, P.
Bramston, T. W.
Brisco, M.
Broadley, H.
Broadwood, H.
Brooke, Lord
Brownrigg, J. S.
Bruges, W. H. L.
Buck, L. W.
Buller, Sir J. Y.
Burrell, Sir C. M.
Burroughes, H. N.
Campbell, Sir H.
Carew, W. H. P.
Castlereagh, Visct.
Cayley, E. S.
Chandos, Marq. of
Chelsea, Visct.

Cholmondeley, hon. H. II.
Christopher, R. A.
Churchill, Lord A. S.
Chute, W. L. W.
Clayton, R. R.
Clifton, J. T.
Clive, Visct.
Cole, hon. H. A.
Collett, W. R.
Colquhoun, J. C.
Colville, C. R.
Compton, H. C.
Coote, Sir C. H.
Courtenay, Lord
Davies, D. A. S.
Deedes, W.
Denison, W. J.
Denison, E. B.
Dick, Quintin
Disraeli, B.
Dodd, G.
Douglas, Sir H.
Douglas, J. D. S.
Dowdeswell, W.
Duckworth, Sir J. T. B.
Duncombe, hon. A.
Duncombe, hon. O.
Du Pre, C. G.
East, J. B.
Emlyn, Visct.
Entwisle, W.
Farnham, E. B.
Fellowes, E.
Filmer, Sir E.
Finch, G.
Fitzmaurice, hon. W.
Floyer, J.
Forbes, W.
Forman, T. S.
Fox, S. L.
Frewen, C. H.
Fuller, A. E.
Gardner, J. D.
Gaskell, J. M.
Gladstone, Capt.
Gooch, E. S.
Gordon, hon. Capt.
Gore, W. O.

Gore, W. R. O.	Newport, Visct.
Goring, C.	Norreys, Lord
Granby, Marq. of	O'Brien, A. S.
Grogan, E.	Ossulston, Lord
Hale, R. B.	Packe, C. W.
Halford, Sir H.	Packington, J. S.
Hall, Col.	Palmer, R.
Halsey, T. P.	Palmer, G.
Harcourt, G. G.	Pigot, Sir R.
Harris, hon. Capt.	Plumpton, J. P.
Heathcote, G. J.	Pollington, Visct.
Heathcote, Sir W.	Powell, Col.
Heneage, E.	Rashleigh, W.
Henley, J. W.	Rendlesham, Lord
Hildyard, T. B. T.	Repton, G. W. J.
Hill, Lord E.	Richards, R.
Hinde, J. H.	Rolleston, Col.
Hodgson, P.	Round, C. J.
Hodgson, R.	Round, J.
Holmes, hon. W. A'C.	Russell, C.
Hope, Sir J.	Ryder, hon. G. D.
Hope, A.	Sanderson, R.
Hotham, Lord	Scott, hon. F.
Houldsworth, T.	Seymer, H. K.
Hudson, G.	Shaw, rt. hon. F.
Hurst, R. H.	Sheppard, T.
Hussey, T.	Sheridan, R. B.
Ingestre, Visct.	Shirley, E. J.
Inglis, Sir H.	Shirley, E. P.
Jolliffe, Sir W. G. H.	Sibthorp, Col.
Jones, Capt.	Smith, A.
Kemble, H.	Smith, Sir H.
Kerrison, Sir E.	Sotheron, T. H. S.
Knight, F. W.	Spooner, R.
Knightley, Sir C.	Spry, Sir S. T.
Law, hon. C. E.	Stanley, E.
Lawson, A.	Stuart, J.
Lennox, Lord G. H. G.	Taylor, E.
Leslie, C. P.	Taylor, J. A.
Lockhart, W.	Thompson, Ald.
Long, W.	Thornhill, G.
Lopes, Sir R.	Tollemache, J.
Lowther, Sir J. H.	Tower, C.
Lowther, hon. Col.	Trollope, Sir J.
Lygon, hon. Gen.	Trotter, J.
Mackenzie, T.	Tyrrell, Sir J. T.
Mackenzie, W. F.	Vyse, R. H. R. H.
Maclean, D.	Vyryan, Sir R. R.
Manners, Lord C. S.	Waddington, H. S.
Manners, Lord J.	Walpole, S. H.
March, Earl of	Walsh, Sir J. B.
Mannsell, T. P.	Williams, T. P.
Maxwell, hon. J. P.	Wodehouse, E.
Mildmay, H. St. John	Worcester, Marq. of
Miles, P. W. S.	Worsley, Lord
Miles, W.	Wynn, Sir W. W.
Morgan, O.	Yorke, hon. E. T.
Morgan, C.	
Mundy, E. M.	
Neeld, J.	
Neeld, J.	

TELLERS.
Beresford, Major
Newdegate, C. N.

Bill read a second time, and ordered to be committed.

SUMMARY.

MAJORITY (TELLERS INCLUDED).

Conservatives	...	...	...	102
Liberals	...	...	...	202
				— 304

MINORITY.

Conservatives	...	...	...	208
Liberals	...	...	...	8
				— 216
Paired	...	...	...	58
Absent, (Conservatives)	...	...	...	29
Ditto (Liberals)	...	...	...	47
Speaker	...	...	...	1
Seats Vacant—Sudbury	2			
Richmond	1			
				3
				658

Paired off.

NOES.	AYES.
Ackers, J.	Ferguson, Sir R.
Alexander, N.	Boyd, J. (Con.)
Archdall, M.	Corbally, M. E.
Attwood, M.	Egerton, Lord P.
Balfour, J. M.	Philips, M.
Barnaby, J.	Ponsonby, hon. C.
Bradshaw, J.	Smollett, A. (Con.)
Bruen, Col.	Damer, Col. D. (Con.)
Codrington, Sir W.	Howard, J.
Conolly, Col.	O'Ferrall, R. M.
Cresswell, A. B.	Standish, C.
Folliott, J.	Barron, Sir H. W.
Forester, G. C.	Dundas, J. C.
Gregory, W. H.	Bunbury, T. (Con.)
Hamilton, G. A.	Redington, T. N.
Hamilton, J. H.	Power, J.
Hoskins, K.	Johnson, Gen.
Irton, S.	James, W.
Leader, J. T.	Drax, J. W. S.
Lefroy, A.	Esmonde, Sir T.
Liddell, H.	Newry, Lord (Con.)
*Lindsay, H. H.	Listowel, Lord
Marton, G.	Pigott, D. R.
Nicholl, J.	Verner, Col. (Con.)
Oswald, A.	Turnor, C. (Con.)
Trevor, G. R.	Dundas, F.
Vesey, T.	O'Brien, C.
Whitmore, T. C.	Chapman, A. (Con.)
Wyndham, Col. C.	O'Connell, M. J.

Absent.

CONSERVATIVES.

Acton, Col.	Hepburn, Sir T.
Ashley, hon. H.	Hussey, A.
Bernard, Lord	Ker, D. S.
Brooke, Sir A.	Lascelles, E.
Bruce, C.	Lindsay, Capt.
Copeland, Ald.	Northland, Lord
Enton, R. J.	Polhill, F.
Egerton, Sir P.	Præd, W. T.
Ferrand, W. B.	Price, R.
Godson, R.	Pusey, P.
Hamilton, B.	Somerset, Lord
Hampden, R.	Vivian, J. E.
Hardy, J.	Welby, G. E.
Hayes, Sir E.	Wyndham, J. C.
Heneage, G. W.	

[On account of the importance of this Division, we subjoin the following non-official statement.]

* Mr. Lindsay and Lord Listowel were both in favour of the Government measure, but had paired on the Continent.

LIBERALS.

Armstrong, Sir A.	Martin, T. B.
Arundel, Lord	Nerreyes, Sir D.
Bell, J.	O'Brien, W. S.
Bellew, R. M.	O'Connell, D.
Berkeley, hen. G.	O'Connell, M.
Blake, Sir V.	O'Connor, Don
Bodkin, J.	Ogle, C. S.
Bulkeley, Sir R.	Philipps, Sir R. B.
Butler, Col.	Pryse, P.
Callaghan, D.	Rice, E. R.
Clements, Lord	Ricardo, J. L.
Dawson, T. V.	Roche, E. B.
Duff, J.	Roebuck, J. A.
Fielden, J.	Sheil, R. L.
French, F.	Shelburne, Lord
Grattan, H.	Stanley, W. O.
Hallyburton, Lord F.	Stuart, W. V.
Heron, Sir R.	Talbot, C. R.
Howard, Capt.	Tuite, H. M.
Jervis, J.	Wemyss, Capt.
Langton, G.	Westonra, J. C.
McDonnell, J.	White, H.
Maitland, T.	Wilde, Sir T.
Maher, N.	

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Monday, April 27, 1846.

THE CORN BILL.—MOTION OF LORD BROUGHAM FOR CERTAIN RETURNS.

LORD BROUGHAM called the attention of the noble and learned Lord upon the Woolsack, and also of the noble Duke (the Duke of Wellington), to a Motion he was about to make for returns connected with the question of the importation of Foreign Corn, and also with the importation of Corn from Ireland. The production of these Papers could not be objected to, because they had already been produced in the other House. It might naturally suggest itself to noble Lords that he was rather premature in moving for returns which went to affect the discussion they were about to have upon that most important measure the Corn Bill, which, he perceived by the Votes of the other House of Parliament, had at various times and in different manners occupied its attention during many weeks of the present Session. It was a measure which he perceived from the same Votes—for of course he could only look to the Votes for information—had made no considerable progress in that House. The state into which the business of the country had been brought, according to the Votes, which were the only records he had access to by the Constitution of the country, and by the law of Parliament, was such that in the foreign capital from which he had lately returned he had heard grave doubts expressed respecting the expediency of our system by persons with whom no doubt he differed upon nearly all political questions. He had in vain defended our system against his friends at the French bar, and among French politicians. He had argued with them, that what they looked upon as the radical defect and vice of our system, was only of a passing, temporary, and accidental nature—that it must be accounted for by the various caprices of fortune, which had placed certain men in certain positions, of which they availed themselves, affecting to be in favour of a measure which in their hearts they hated, or affecting to be against a measure which in their hearts they loved, only complaining that it did not go far enough, and waving their opposition to the measure they loved, in the hope of postponing the measure they hated. He had given this explanation to his friends in France of the present state of things with regard to the Corn Bill.

For going into Committee, Feb. 27. Ayes 339.			THE MAJORITY. (Tellers included.)	For second reading of Bill, March 27. Ayes 304.		
Whigs.	Tories.	Total.	Representing	Whigs.	Tories.	Total.
13	12	25	English Counties ...	11	12	23
143	68	211	English Boroughs ...	134	65	199
—	2	2	English Universities.	—	2	2
1	4	5	Welch Counties	—	4	4
7	3	10	Welch Boroughs	4	3	7
20	4	24	Irish Counties	11	5	16
21	7	28	Irish Boroughs	17	3	20
5	8	13	Scotch Counties	5	6	11
20	1	21	Scotch Boroughs	21	1	22
230	109	339	Totals	203	101	304
Minority 242				Minority 216		
Majority 97				Majority 88		

For Protection Feb. 27. Noes 242.			THE MINORITY. (Tellers included.)	For Protection on March 27. Noes 210.		
Whigs.	Tories.	Total.	Representing	Whigs.	Tories.	Total.
4	104	108	English Counties ...	4	99	103
6	77	83	English Boroughs ...	2	74	76
—	2	2	English Universities.	—	2	2
—	1	1	Isle of Wight	—	1	1
—	8	8	Welch Counties	—	8	8
—	2	2	Welch Boroughs	—	2	2
1	21	22	Irish Counties	1	10	11
—	2	2	Irish Boroughs	—	2	2
—	2	2	Irish Universities ...	—	1	1
—	11	11	Scotch Counties	—	10	10
—	1	1	Scotch Boroughs ...	—	—	—
11	231	242	Totals	7	203	210

"But," said they, "facts are against you; you do not get on; your business is stopped; there is an utter incapacity to carry on the business of the country; and how long it is to last, or what is to happen, who can tell?" His other answer had been this: the nature of the British Constitution, and its singular excellence, is, that wherever there shall happen to arise any temporary mischief from the friction of the parts of the machine, or any resistance in the medium through which it moves, there is in that great political engine (the perfection of human polity, as he firmly, conscientiously, and seriously believed—a well regulated constitutional monarchy, acting by means of a well regulated representative system) a *vis medicatrix*, a power of readjustment, self-corrective and adaptative, which never failed to get rid of any temporary obstruction, and to restore harmony in its working. Their Lordships possessed a power within themselves of applying the corrective, and of administering an effectual remedy. If in any quarter, of whatever colour of politics, the desperate hope was entertained of frustrating the intentions of Parliament, and of the country, by endless and vexatious delays, or of postponing the arrival of that great, and, in his conscience he believed, most salutary measure into their Lordships' House till it should be too late to discuss it, (for without ample discussion God forbid it should be carried this Session,) then the remedy was in their Lordships' own hands, for they had the power of anticipating the discussion, and of coming to a deliberate and well-considered opinion. And if, in the course of a fortnight, he should, by having recourse again to the Votes, still find the same obstruction to this, and indeed to all business elsewhere—for it was not to the Corn Bill, but to all other business that the obstruction referred—he should deem it his bounden duty, as their Lordships had the unquestionable right, to bring on the subject for discussion without waiting for the Bill; and thus give noble Lords an opportunity of discussing, and deliberating, and pronouncing their opinion upon the general principle of that great and most important commercial change. And when their Lordships, after discussion, should have pronounced a favourable opinion upon the principle, as he earnestly hoped and confidently expected would be the case, then he might venture, without any gift of prophecy, to foretell that the passage of that and other measures would no

longer meet with obstruction elsewhere. With the view, therefore, of preparing for the discussion, which might be wholly unnecessary, but which might also become absolutely necessary—he took leave to move for the returns.

Motion agreed to.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Monday, May 4, 1846.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL— COMMITTEE.

On the Question that the Speaker do leave the Chair, for the House to go into Committee on the Corn Importation Bill,

LORD G. BENTINCK said: Sir, I rise to oppose your leaving the Chair, as a new feature and a new character has arisen in the discussion of this question since it came under the consideration of the House, by what has fallen from the right hon. Gentleman at the head of Her Majesty's Government. The right hon. Baronet has allowed it to go forth to the country that those measures which he desires to have repealed, and which at the time he first intimated his intention to that effect he deemed to be impolitic, he now considers unjust—that he who has had a hand in the construction of every Corn Law Act that has been devised for the last thirty years, has now been induced, by the debate of the last three months, so far to change his opinion, that those laws which at the early part of last autumn he had disapproved of for the first time, he now deems to be unjust. I think, Sir, we ought not to allow this measure to go further until the right hon. Gentleman has stated those views upon this subject which have induced him to come to this extraordinary conclusion, who has for so many years exerted himself to maintain those laws. Sir, I am well aware that by delaying this measure, we shall be told that we are creating a stagnation of trade. Sir, we are not responsible for that stagnation. It is not those who resist a change of the laws, but those who are creating a change in the commercial laws of the country, who are alone responsible for this stagnation. Sir, we have been told again and again in this House—I believe by the noble Lord the Member for Lincolnshire—that the farmers of England are desirous to see a speedy settlement of this question. Sir, I do not admit that the farmers of England

are desirous to see a speedy settlement of this question, unless it is to be accomplished by the rejection of the measure proposed by Her Majesty's Ministers. But, Sir, if I am to be told that the farmers of England expect that the price of corn will be raised by the introduction of 1,500,000 quarters of foreign wheat into their markets, the farmers would be justly liable to that accusation which was once made unjustly against them by the noble Lord the Member for the city of London, when he said that "they were as dull as the clods they broke."

LORD J. RUSSELL: I never said anything of the kind. When I proposed a fixed duty of 8s., and when I was charged with being an enemy to the farmers, I told those who said so that they were somewhat of the character which you just described.

LORD G. BENTINCK: I am glad to hear the explanation of my noble Friend. I do not think that it could have been foreseen that the farmers could have met with such double-dealing and treachery from those who professed to be their friends. Sir, it was certainly stated in this House that the farmers of England were anxious to see a speedy settlement of this question; and it was further stated here and elsewhere that it would be of essential service to the farmers of England, that foreign wheat should be introduced for home consumption, and to assist the sale of their own wheat. If I look back to all former precedents, I cannot see one single instance in which the importation of large quantities of foreign grain could raise the price of English wheat. I can recollect, in 1838, when the price was 73s., that there were imported in about six weeks 2,500,000 quarters of wheat into this country. Was the effect of that importation to raise the price of English wheat, or improve the markets for the farmers? The effect of that importation was to lower the price of wheat to the full extent of 12s. a quarter. Again, in 1842—soon after the passing of the law of 1842—as soon, in fact, as it came well into operation—the prices and quantity imported were as follow:

1842.	Price.	Quarters.
July 30	63s. }	311,193 2,186,000
August 27	55s. }	
September 3	53s. }	
Showing a fall of 10s.		
1843.	Price.	Quarters.
August 10	59s. }	80,282 748,454
August 26	56s. }	
September 16	50s. }	
Fall 9s.		

1844.	Price.	Quarters.
July 20	54s.	352,118
August 10	48s.	141,156
Fall 6s.		

1845.
No importation exceeding 15,027 Quarters.

Prices gradually rose, the greatest rise being 6s. 2d. In the month of August only 907 quarters of foreign wheat were imported. Sir, I think that I have shown clearly that farmers must be an easily deluded set, if they will believe that the introduction of 1,500,000 of quarters of foreign grain will enhance the price of English wheat, or be any benefit to them. I refer back again to 1838, when, as I before stated, upwards of 1,500,000 quarters were imported, and will read a description of the markets, during several weeks in September and October of that year, as yet set forth in *Knight's Political Dictionary*:—

1838. Weeks ending	Six weeks' average price.	Weekly average price.	Duty.
Sept. 14.	73s.	61s.	1s. 0d.
12.	—	01	2 8
28.	—	—	10 8
Oct. 5.	—	—	16 8
12.	—	—	20 8
19.	—	—	21 8
26.	—	—	22 8

During the week of nominal duty no less than 1,514,047 quarters of foreign wheat were liberated from bond, and flung suddenly into the English markets, deranging every calculation of the merchant and farmer, but affording a rich harvest to the speculators. The cargoes which arrived too late to profit by the low duties perished in the warehouses, and were thrown into the sea when they became unfit for human food. As I have before stated, the result was to reduce the price of wheat to the full extent, 12s. a quarter, and, therefore, if the experience of the past is worth anything, it will be this, that the farmers of England will learn that they ought to keep away from foreign importation as long as possible, as the bringing into consumption those 1,500,000 quarters of wheat will only be to reduce prices. Is there anything in the state of the markets, either as to the existing prices or the quantity that is to be consumed, which should induce us to forget the interest of the farmer for the sake of the consumer? The average price of wheat on the 25th of April was no more than 55s. 6d., and that, Sir, is within the range of 54s. and 56s., which, four years ago, the right hon. Baronet at the head of

Her Majesty's Government stated was the price which would generally be obtained by the operation of his Bill. Well, Sir, has the supply and the consumption been affected by the stagnation in the corn market? I have taken the trouble to compare the quantity of grain sold in England within the last four weeks with the quantity sold during the same period of last year, which is as follows. The noble Lord read the following:—

"Comparative Statement of Grain sold in England, for the past Four Weeks, with the same period for 1845:—

To 5th April, 1845.			
	s.	d.	Quarters.
Wheat	46	5	123,100
Barley	32	5	47,878
Oats	21	4	44,391
Rye	20	6	170
Beans	35	0	0,203
Peas	35	7	1,382

To 12th April.			
Wheat	46	3	99,629
Barley	32	5	42,183
Oats	20	9	53,304
Rye	30	6	92
Beans	35	5	7,270
Peas	36	6	878

To 10th April.			
Wheat	45	11	103,780
Barley	31	11	36,382
Oats	21	4	41,139
Rye	32	1	94
Beans	35	1	7,426
Peas	36	1	840

To 20th April.			
Wheat	45	11	115,876
Barley	31	6	29,255
Oats	20	11	47,305
Rye	30	9	207
Beans	35	0	9,369
Peas	36	1	706

Total ... 821,291

To 4th April, 1846.			
Wheat	55	0	120,292
Barley	30	0	73,593
Oats	22	6	56,179
Rye	33	7	300
Beans	34	10	11,460
Peas	34	2	1,831

To 11th April.			
Wheat	50	0	104,616
Barley	30	9	60,285
Oats	22	9	46,603
Rye	33	4	200
Beans	35	1	11,901
Peas	33	8	1,065

To 18th April.			
Wheat	55	10	101,107
Barley	30	5	58,140
Oats	22	9	41,037
Rye	35	5	371
Beans	34	9	0,549
Peas	34	5	1,456

Carried forward ... 708,195

Brought forward ... 708,195 qrs.

To 25th April.

Wheat	55	0	118,357
Barley	30	1	53,041
Oats	23	4	45,537
Rye	33	7	332
Beans	34	10	10,536
Peas	33	10	1,392

Total ... 937,990"

So that in this year of stagnation of trade, in this year of famine, there have been 116,000 quarters more of grain sold in the 288 markets of England than were sold in the four corresponding weeks of last year. Let the farmers of England recollect that this grain is of their own growth, for there has been scarcely any foreign grain introduced into the markets during the last month, which shows clearly that they possess an advantage so long as this delay is continued, which permits them to retain a monopoly of their markets; and the people of England are not suffering from any stint whilst they have the means of purchasing 116,000 quarters more within the last four weeks than in four weeks of the year that is gone by. I hope, therefore, if there is any farmer who has been led to believe, from false friends, that his interests are suffering by not having an immediate settlement of this question, he will now know that it is not so, but quite the contrary; and in reference to the statement that prices would be improved by the infusion of foreign corn, I think I have shown that there can be no proof of that assertion. Sir, again, with respect to prices. We are told that this is a year of famine; and I find, upon comparing the price of this year with the price of last year—which, I believe, was the cheapest year since 1836—I find that wheat has risen in price 21 per cent., oats 11½ per cent., and rye 20½ per cent.; whilst every other description of grain has fallen in a great degree. I am therefore surprised, when I hear people talk of famine, to find that wheat has risen only 21 per cent. upon the price of that year, and when it was the very lowest; and the food of the people of Ireland has risen only 10 per cent.; therefore, I am reduced to think that those who talk of famine do not know much about it. Sir, on a former occasion I showed, successfully, I believe, to this House, that the fluctuations in the price of wheat had been much lower in this country since the Bill of 1842 had become the law of this country. I was answered again, by being told that the price of wheat in foreign countries was dependent upon the price of wheat in

this country—an assertion which I am not disposed to admit. Rye and oats have not been considered of so much importance as other kinds of grain in this country, and therefore there has not been the same facility for discovering their respective prices. Sir, I have been enabled to obtain an account of the prices and fluctuations of rye and oats in several countries in Europe from 1835 to 1840, which were as follows:—

AMSTERDAM.		Greatest fluctuation in the same year.	
s. d.	Fluctuation.	per cent.	per cent.
Highest (1839)	42 6	147	1830 147
Lowest (1839)	17 6	147	1830 147
Average price, 6 years, 15s. 5½d.			

DITTO OATS.		per cent.	
s. d.	Fluctuation.	per cent.	per cent.
Highest (1839)	23 5	155	1830 122
Lowest (1836)	9 0	155	1830 122
Namely, highest, 20s.; lowest, 8s.			

HAMBURG RYE.		per cent.	
s. d.	Fluctuation.	per cent.	per cent.
Highest (1839)	53 0	165	1839 112
Lowest (1837)	20 6	165	1839 112
Namely, highest, 53s.; lowest, 21s. 9d.			
Average price, 6 yrs., 10s. 8d.			

OATS.		per cent.	
s. d.	Fluctuation.	per cent.	per cent.
Highest (1840)	30 0	172	1833 163
Lowest (1836)	11 0	172	1833 163
Namely, highest, 29s. 3d.; lowest, 11s. 3d.			

DANTZIC RYE.		per cent.	
s. d.	Fluctuation.	per cent.	per cent.
Highest (1840)	31 8	210	1838 163
Lowest (1839)	10 6	210	1838 163
Namely, highest, 27s. 6d.; lowest, 12s.			
Average price, 6 yrs., 10s. 8½d.			

OATS.		per cent.	
s. d.	Fluctuation.	per cent.	per cent.
Highest (1838)	14 0	133	1835 54
Lowest (1835)	6 6	133	1835 54
Namely, highest, 10s.; lowest, 6s. 6d.			

RIOA RYE.		per cent.	
s. d.	Fluctuation.	per cent.	per cent.
Highest (1840)	28 0	86	1833 68
Lowest (1839)	15 0	86	1833 68
Namely, highest, 27s.; lowest, 16s.			
Average price, 5 years, 14s. 6d.			

OATS.		per cent.	
s. d.	Fluctuation.	per cent.	per cent.
Highest (1839)	20 0	100	1837 70
Lowest (1837)	10 9	100	1837 70
Namely, highest, 17s.; lowest, 10s.			

Now, Sir, when it is recollected, that after the passing of the Corn Bill of 1842, that the fluctuations of prices in this country have never exceeded 30 per cent. in the food of the people, it must be evident, that those people who rely upon the principle that the repeal of the Corn Laws will create greater steadiness of prices, will find that they are much mistaken; for instead of prices obtaining greater steadiness, they must, by a repeal of the Corn Laws, be affected by the fluctuations of other countries. The late Mr. Huskisson, who has been always considered a good authority, and whose opinions have often been referred to, held the language from 1814 down to the period of his death, that the prices should remain

steady, and it was fluctuation which most affected the interests of the country; therefore, Sir, if I have shown you that not only in wheat, but in rye and oats, the food of the people of those countries—that in all foreign countries, the fluctuations in prices have been much greater than in England during the existence of the sliding scale; unless you are able to refute those statements of mine the ground is cut from under your feet, when you endeavour to impress upon the farmers that the country will prosper under a repeal of the Corn Laws to a greater extent than under that of the sliding scale. Sir, we were told in the early part of this discussion, that it was for us to choose as our motto, “Advance” or “Recede.” We were told by the right hon. Gentleman the First Lord of the Treasury, that if we made our election to advance, we should raise the watchword for all the nations of Europe and America—that there would be no State of Europe or America in which the friends of commercial freedom would not be encouraged. We were told that Prussia was already shaken. Sir, we were told once before, by the hon. and learned Member for Bolton, that Prussia was determined to retreat—that we had only to mitigate our laws regarding corn and timber, and that Prussia would immediately relax her restrictions. Well, Sir, we do largely relax, both in regard to timber and corn; but Prussia has not been shaken—Prussia has not relaxed—but has drawn closer the laws with regard to her trade with this country. Sir, we were told that if we relaxed, it would have a great effect upon the French Government—that reflecting minds in France would be enabled successfully to work with the Chambers of France, and the authorities which consist of the commercial interests of the country. Sir, when the right hon. Baronet comes down to this House, and states that the Government of France are willing to relax her laws, we take it for granted that the right hon. Gentleman has some formal information to that effect. But, Sir, what is the course that has been adopted by the Ministers of France? Do M. Guizot and the other Ministers seize the opportunity of expressing their admiration of the policy of England, and give the highest praise to the right hon. Gentleman? Far from it: they tell the people of France that France is not prepared to tread in the path of England. Sir, do not we find that France has not adopted the watchword, or attempted to avail herself of the relaxation in our duties? When we find that the promise

of the right hon. Gentleman has no chance of being fulfilled, you are not entitled to say that she acts with any degree of reciprocity. The language used by M. Guizot is as remarkable as it is beautiful; and I am sure the House will excuse me for reading a passage from the report of the French Chambers on the 1st of April last. M. Guizot says—

"No one, Gentlemen, is a greater friend than I am to the influence of landed property, and, I will say, to the preponderance of the agricultural interests in a great country. I am convinced that that interest is the best and most solid foundation for the prosperity and the security of society. I am, then, for my own part, a very sincere and very decided friend of the influence of the agricultural interest in a great country. No one can deny that in England in particular it is the influence of landed property, of the agricultural interest, to the influence of what people have been in the habit of calling the territorial aristocracy, that England owes its strength, and a great part of its liberties, and its prosperity. England has found in that class what all great nations will find among the same class, while they search for it, the spirit of conservatism and the spirit of independence at the same time; that is to say, the two great pledges of liberty and political power."

These, Sir, are the sentiments of one of the wisest Ministers that ever governed a great country. These are the sentiments of one of the wisest Ministers—of one of the wisest Monarchs, that ever reigned over France. These are the sentiments once entertained by Her Majesty's Ministers; and happy would it be, in my opinion, for England, if she now had Ministers sitting on those benches who entertained opinions expressed with so much eloquence in the Chamber of Deputies on the first day of April last. But, Sir, if such have been the language and sentiments of M. Guizot, it is for this House and for the country to consider what has been the language of this Minister so far as the proposed relaxations are concerned; and what his disposition to adopt a system of reciprocity. Speaking of Sir Robert Peel's plan, he says—

"Let us, therefore, lay the first portion of Sir Robert Peel's plan aside. It is a great and beautiful spectacle given to us, but there is nothing in it which we should hurry ourselves to take or to apply at home. Let us, then, look to the second, Gentlemen, the second part, the extension of competition as applied to the different branches of national industry, my hon. Friend the Minister of Commerce frankly told you yesterday was the very plan on which the French Government has been acting for several years past. It is true that in the matter of industry we are conservators, we are protectors. We intend to maintain the conservative system and the protecting system; but we also intend to modify, to enlarge, and to soften it in proportion as new wants may require, and as the change or new opportunities may cast up.

Not only do we intend to do this, but we have always done it. How many prohibitions have been abolished since 1830? How many tariffs have been lowered? If a table of these abolitions and reductions were placed before you, you would see what progress we have already made in that course, truly liberal and reforming, while it is at the same time moderate and prudent."

I wish the First Minister of this country showed the same prudence as has been manifested by the Minister of a foreign country. What are the sentiments of the French Minister of Commerce? Speaking of the commercial reforms of the English Ministry, he says—

"The economical reforms proposed in the British Parliament cannot fail to have fixed the general attention. Those who think that we should not hesitate to imitate the example given us by the English Parliament, advise a premature and dangerous act."

I do not think, notwithstanding what has been said to the contrary, that Prussia will fall into our line of policy. I do not think that the success of the principles hitherto acted upon in Prussia will induce her to an abandonment of her present course. When the right hon. Baronet talked about Prussia, and anticipated such flattering results from the reciprocity system, I think he found himself in the same fool's paradise as was expressed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary at War, referring to the hon. and learned Gentleman the Member for Bolton. Prussia may, indeed, rejoice at being able to export larger quantities of timber and corn; but I do not think it will be found that she will import more of our cotton manufactures, of our printed calicoes, than she does at present. Now, Sir, with respect to America. Do you think the United States of America are prepared to abolish their hostile tariffs? Does the last news from America display any intention of adopting such a line of policy? I think not. It is apparent from the latest information, that there is no probability of her being able to spare the revenue which is at present raised by her high tariffs. Well, then, Sir, is there anything that has transpired since the last discussion upon the Corn Laws in this House, to make us lean more strangely to the policy of Government respecting them? Has anything transpired with regard to Ireland, out of which the right hon. Baronet can argue that the protective system ought to be done away with? Has that potato famine which it was at first predicted would occur in February—afterwards, as the debate wore on, was postponed till March—and then, as this discussion drew "its slow length along," was put off again until May, when it was

solemnly declared, in prophetic tones, that that month would not have arrived until all his melancholy forebodings had been confirmed—has that famine, I say, Sir, arrived yet? The fulfilment of the last prophecy was postponed until July. Now, I ask the Government, has that potato famine happened? So far from it, Sir, I believe, generally speaking, the prices of potatoes have fallen, rather than increased, in the course of the last few weeks. Unquestionably, there is far from being a famine anywhere; nor can it be said, except in a few localities, that there is even greater than even ordinary scarcity. Scarcity there may be—which, unfortunately, is nothing new in many districts in Ireland; but famine is quite a different thing. In Cork, we were told, the greatest scarcity prevailed. We were told that in the city of Cork there was great scarcity. I can hardly believe that the destitution there can be so great as has been set forth. Cork, it is said, has one of the wealthiest corporations in Ireland; it is said to enjoy a revenue of 70,000*l.* or 80,000*l.* a year. And how much has this wealthy corporation subscribed for the relief of the people? 100*l.*!—100*l.* towards “the relief of the starving people of Cork!” Why, Sir, can any man of sense believe that the corporation of Cork, with a revenue of 70,000*l.* or 80,000*l.* a year, would subscribe but 100*l.* if they really believed that destitution existed to the extent stated by Her Majesty’s Ministers, and in some of the reports laid before Parliament? But, Sir, I have other proof that the scarcity of potatoes cannot be altogether so great in the county of Cork as has been represented. I have a letter here from the chairman of the Great Western Steam Company, mentioning, that on the 1st of May the *Olize* packet arrived at Bristol with sixty tons of potatoes from the county of Cork. What are the gentry of Ireland doing? What is the Government of Ireland about, if famine prevails, that they do not buy up the potatoes and prevent their exportation? I hold in my hand a letter referring to another county, which, when distress prevails, has always been the first to feel it—I mean the county of Mayo—and what states this letter? It is from Mr. Browne, who was once a Member of this House. It is dated April 21, 1846, and addressed to my noble Friend Lord Stanley. It is perhaps as well to state that Mr. Browne is the agent—I should rather say the cousin—of the Marquess of Sligo, and that he manages the Irish estates

of that nobleman. The letter is as follows:—

“Market Browne, Monday 21, 1846.

“My dear Lord—I have thought it right to permit three weeks to pass over since I last wrote, in order that I might be enabled to send your Lordship a report embracing the proceedings of these markets in our principal towns, and which generally regulate and determine the prices throughout the country: the markets of Westport and Castlebar, to which I refer, three weeks since, suddenly, and without any apparent cause, got into a very excited state, and prices of meal and potatoes advanced considerably.”

It is not at all wonderful that the markets should be excited when Her Majesty’s Ministers alarmed the country by declaring there was danger of a famine. When Her Majesty’s Ministers, who, in former periods, have been looked up to as speaking nothing but the truth, as accurately describing the condition of the country, have, to serve their own purposes, raised an excitement by which they hoped to carry the repeal of the Corn Laws; it is little wonder the markets should have been disturbed, and that men’s minds should have been excited. It is, I say, Her Majesty’s Ministers, who by concocting a false alarm—who by exaggerating local appearances of scarcity into a general famine—it is they who have caused an unnatural elevation of the price of food, by raising a hope that those who bought it up for gain, would be able to sell it again at famine price. If the price of food in Ireland was at one period unnaturally high, it was in a great measure caused by the alarm wickedly and unfoundedly raised by the Government. The letter goes on to say—

“But the two last market prices of potatoes and meal have returned to the most moderate rates, with supplies, which, both in quantity and quality, have never been exceeded at this season of the year—indeed, the supply of potatoes at Westport, last Thursday, was so great, that a considerable portion had to be stored from want of purchasers; and, at Castlebar, Saturday’s prices were drooping, with a full supply and quality excellent: the present prices throughout the country may thus be quoted:—Perlor potatoes, first quality of the article, from 3½*d.* to 4*d.* per stone; lump potatoes, second quality, 2½*d.* to 3*d.* per stone; oatmeal in the greatest abundance at from 1*s.* to 1½*s.* per cwt. Here we have not the slightest excitement on the score of famine, or even scarcity; for every one feels confident that the former is impossible, while the latter, if it comes, can be easily met by the supplies already secured for themselves by the great bulk of the population, and with the huge amount of oatmeal in the hands of merchants and petty speculators throughout the country. In short, every day’s experience strongly points out the exaggerated statements which the Government have thought it right to put forward as a foundation for their ruinous proceedings, which will prove much more rotten than

their poor potato allies. The county surveyor, Mr. Best, a most intelligent man, and who, for the last month, in attendance at the usual and extraordinary road sessions, has been lately in every hile and corner of the county, no later than Saturday, in the course of a long conversation with me, told me that he had no fears about famine; that even a scarcity he did not think was to be apprehended beyond a period of three or four weeks between the old and new crop; and that he knew that there were ample supplies to meet every possible demand. The present distress, he says, is to be found in little over-peopled spots, the property of poor, negligent, or absentee landlords, who, under any circumstances, must be wretched at this season of the year. He says that he has no hesitation in saying that there never was such a delusion attempted as the idea of famine in this part of Ireland. Lord Lucan's agent also told me on Saturday, that he apprehended not in the least even a serious scarcity; that Lord Lucan had sent him instructions a few days previously to purchase fifty tons of oatmeal for his tenantry; but that he replied to Lord Lucan that he did not think it necessary to make the purchase, both on the grounds that he did not believe the tenantry would require it, and that most likely, from the abundance of supplies, prices would be much more moderate in a month than now. The next great property is Sir Roger Pitman's. His agent takes exactly the same view of things as Lord Lucan's, and as to Lord Sligo's huge principality here, for, in truth, from its extent, it may be so termed, we have no fears, for the people on it have as yet plenty, and anything that is wanting, should there be a little pressure, Lord Sligo will himself find. Under all these circumstances, as you may suppose, we are in good spirits here; and if the Government will be charitable enough not to try and convince us that we are dying of hunger and disease, while we are contented, hale, and hearty, we shall weather the storm that they, with such industry, have raised wantonly and cruelly; it must be said that they have (like in all such matters) been obliged to bolster up their first exaggeration (a mild term) by adding a more gross story in the matter of pestilence, which is not at present to be heard of anywhere."

I have shown you, then, that in Mayo the highest quality of potato ranged at $3\frac{1}{2}d.$ to $4d.$ per stone, and the second quality from $2\frac{1}{2}d.$ to $3d.$ per stone. I have also shown you that oatmeal has varied its price at from $14s.$ to $15s.$ a cwt. Does that betoken scarcity? I think I have given you a fair picture of the actual state of things in Mayo. I will now turn to Tipperary. And, first, I will quote the statement of the correspondent of the *Dublin Evening Mail* of May 1; he says—

"The labourers in the South Riding of Tipperary refuse to work for less than $1s. 4d.$ a day, which is an advance of $4d.$ per diem on the rate of wages paid last year. In most cases the farmers have been obliged to pay the advance, otherwise their lands would have remained uncultivated this spring. The best potatoes were selling in Cashel last Saturday at $4d.$ a stone of fourteen pounds. Cashel is the most extensive market for potatoes of any in the county of Tipperary, and generally regulates the prices of those rates in all the other

markets of that country, being the place from which the colliers of Slieveardah are principally supplied. The demand at present is mostly for seed potatoes, to be put into the ground during the month of May. As yet no very extraordinary scarcity appears; and it is thought that, after the planting season is over, the prices must fall considerably, and indeed, that those of inferior quality will be then altogether unsaleable. Indian meal is beginning to make its appearance, and the prejudices against its use are wearing away. The mining colliers use it abundantly, and they are accustomed to better food than agricultural labourers. The miners seldom cultivate any land, but depend almost entirely on the markets for their subsistence. Their wages are good, being from $2s.$ to $2s. 6d.$ per day, according to abilities."

But, Sir, I have other letters from Tipperary. I have one from Lord Glengall to the Earl of Charleville, of which I will read an extract to the House. It is dated Caher, April 20, and the passage runs thus:—

"With respect to the outrages which have taken place at Clonmel and vicinity, I have to state, that on the 17th instant, the magistrates of Clonmel met, during the turmoil, and represented to Government that the outrages which have taken place in that town and neighbourhood, particularly the attack on the boats, have not been committed by the destitute poor; that though destitution does exist to a great extent, it is made by others a pretext for an insurrectionary movement of a very dangerous character, which, if not immediately checked, may be productive of very serious consequences; that parties of loose character, at night, went to the farmers residing at the foot of Sliem, Naman Mountain, and obliged them to join the movement, and give their carts for the purpose of placing them at the bridge of KILLSHELAN village, in order to carry away the plunder taken from the boats of the Clonmel merchants; they also stated, that on the day previous (the 16th) they had information of a large party of armed men being at the above bridge. For my own part, I can confidently state, that it is the unanimous opinion of the authorities that these outrages have been principally, if not wholly, committed by mere plunderers, and by mobs of farmers' servant men, temporarily hired, and other loose characters, strangers in this country, who, this season in every year, wander about the country, looking for employment. I should add that Clonmel cannot be excelled by any town in England of same extent, for more steady, regular, and constant employment of mechanics and the labouring classes."

With respect to the price of potatoes at Clonmel, when the returns were made to this House, they were stated at $5d.$ and $5\frac{1}{2}d.$ per stone. On the 18th of April, as appears from a return in my hand, good potatoes were in the next principal town, and in the same county, Cashel, only $3\frac{1}{2}d.$ per stone—a sufficient proof that the temporary rise in the markets was the effect of sudden excitement. I believe it is notorious that the disturbances which occurred in Carrick-on-Suir did not arise from the destitution of the rioters; for it is stated that two of the ringleaders had, the one a

bank receipt for 20*l.*, and the other a bank receipt for 50*l.*, in their pockets when arrested. It has been very currently rumoured that Mr. Gulson, one of the Poor Law Commissioners, was sent to Ireland for the purpose of ascertaining the actual state of things there, and that the result of his observations would not permit him to confirm the statements of the Government. I think, at all events, that if a gentleman of the character and station of a Poor Law Commissioner has been sent to Ireland for the purpose of ascertaining the truth of the reports as regards the scarcity there, we have a right to expect that such information should be laid before Parliament. But it would seem that all information has been assiduously kept back from us, which would go to prove that the statements of the Government were incorrect, and that every document which could in any way sustain these statements has been with great pains and industry supplied. I will read an extract from the *Evening Mail*, showing the state of things in Loughsheelan:—

"Your panic-mongers have eaten dirt, and are regorging it in apologies and excuses for the low prices which potatoes have fetched throughout the country for the four last months. One authorized reporter assures us that this unforeseen anomaly is owing to the farmers drafting them off to market in order to get rid of them before they become tainted or rotten. This reasoning has been cheered and echoed in the House of Commons from day to day; and yet, here we are on May-eve, the period fixed for the total exhaustion of the produce; and so far are the perverse potatoes from fulfilling the prophecy, that they are actually coming into the market in greater abundance than is required by the consumers as food, and of those also who want them for seeding their land. Nay, more, it is the opinion of the best informed upon the subject—and I have spoken to many whose knowledge and inquiries are extensive—gentlemen, farmers, and labourers—that as soon as the planting season is over, we shall have good, sound, healthy potatoes, much cheaper than they are at present. There is great demand for labour throughout the country, at advancing wages—the current prices being from 1*s.* to 1*s.* 3*d.* a day, without diet; and with diet, 1*s.* There is much spring work yet undone; and until that is finished, the demand for labour will continue as brisk as it is at present. The weather of late has been as favourable to health as to farming operations. There is no fever in the country that I could hear of."

The correspondent of the *Dublin Evening Mail* goes on to speak of Granard:—

"At Granard, on Monday last, there was an immense supply of potatoes, at from 3*d.* to 4*d.* a stone. Many cart-loads remaining unsold were brought home by the owners, greatly disappointed that their promised high prices could not be realized. Kilmalek market, on Thursday, presented the same features. The market of Cavan, on Tuesday, was abundantly supplied with potatoes

of excellent quality, at prices varying from 3½*d.* to 4½*d.* a stone. Oatmeal brought from 14*s.* 9*d.* to 15*s.* 3*d.* per cwt. On the preceding Thursday, nearly one-half of the potatoes remained unsold, and was carried back by the owners. The best could be had in the evening at 3*d.* per stone."

And, as regards the market price at Ballyjamesduff, the same correspondent says—

"At Ballyjamesduff, where (if Parliamentary Reports are to be credited) the scarcity is said to be so great as to drive people to suicide (!), the market on the 21st of April was glutted with the supply. Many cart-loads of good, sound, healthy potatoes left the market unsold, though offered so low as from 3*d.* to 4*d.* a stone. One instance will suffice to show, that so far as this kind of food is concerned, we have no lack of it. A farmer sold a cart-load of sound, excellent seed potatoes early in the day at 3½*d.* a stone, and received from the purchaser half-a-crown as earnest. The market price fell, and he left the potatoes with the farmer (whose name and place of abode our correspondent has furnished us with) forfeiting his half-crown; and they were brought home in the evening by the owner. The potatoes were unexceptionable; excellent healthy seed. In fact, so far as the greater portion of the county of Cavan is concerned, the supply, to my knowledge, far exceeds the demand."

The following is from the *Mayo Constitution*:—

"We are happy to state that provisions still continue at moderate prices in this town. Indeed we cannot say that a scarcity is to be feared in this neighbourhood. Potatoes rated on Saturday last at from 3½*d.* to 4*d.* per stone; meal, at from 14*s.* to 15*s.* per cwt.; and when we compare these prices with those of 1844 and 1845, we think we have grounds for our assertion. Potatoes sold in April, 1844, in this town, at from 2½*d.* to 3*d.* per stone, and meal from 11*s.* to 12*s.* per cwt.; and in 1845, potatoes from 2½*d.* to 3½*d.* per stone, and meal from 10*s.* 10*d.* to 12*s.* per cwt."

I will read another extract from the *Clare Journal* of May 1. It is headed "Plentiful Supply of Potatoes:"—

"Our two last market days were absolutely overstocked with this edible; and in the memory of the most experienced market men, seldom has a better description or a larger supply been witnessed here; they seem to have reascited and come forth in their primitive fame and comeliness, to cheer the heart of brother Pat in his most desponding moment. There has been a marked similarity between the disease by which they were partially affected, and that of the frightful pestilence, cholera, which committed such ravages in many families, while their neighbours totally escaped its scourge—the crops of many turned out prolific and sound, and so continued; when others—unfortunately the most struggling people—suffered most by the visitation; and a loss in a poor man's customary food, he being solely at the mercy of casual labour, overpowers and brings him to a state of pauperism. Were it not for the failure, of which we have heard so many complaints—greatly exaggerated we are sure they have been—potatoes would be almost a drug in this and other markets. There were 140 tons brought into Sligo market on last Saturday, which sold from 1*s.* to 1*s.* 5*d.* per peck, the latter priced

being cups and apples of a superior kind—diseased potatoes are fast disappearing; those brought in for sale bring from 6d. to 8d. per peck, about the eighth portion being tainted. We have been assured by respectable farmers that they have sustained but small loss in this way, having given them to cattle, which seemed to relish and thrive on that food. One-half the oatmeal, two tons, at 15s., brought in for sale, was left unpurchased."

I could read numerous other statements of the same tendency referring to other Irish counties; and it is in vain for Her Majesty's Ministers to say that any thing has occurred since the commencement of the debates as regards famine in Ireland, which could justify the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government in saying that those laws which he had hitherto admitted to be impolitic, he now deems to be unjust. I think we are entitled to know before we go into Committee on this question, what are the new circumstances which have come to the knowledge of the right hon. Baronet, which has caused him for the last time to change anew his opinion. With regard to this potato famine, I have before referred to the speeches of the French Minister. I will again refer to the official letters published in the month of November last by the French Minister, M. Cunin-Gridaine. When the alarm of famine was raised in France, M. Cunin-Gridaine did not tread in the footsteps of the English Minister; he did not attempt to exaggerate the alarm, and cause panic or excitement in the minds of the people of France. But, on the contrary, he addressed an argumentative letter to the *préfets* of France, which was published in all the journals, and in which he calmly entered into a full discussion, and brought the people of France to the conviction that there was no just ground for excitement or alarm, either in France or in any other country in the world. And what was the result? The result was, as I could show by the corn circulars by me, that the prices of corn in Paris rose less than in any other country in Europe. The good sense of the English people, too, went far to correct the mischief attempted by Her Majesty's Ministers—the good sense of the English people showed them that the stack-yards of the farmer were fuller than they had been over before known—that there was abundance of corn of all descriptions—they reflected upon the large amount of grain in bond, and they knew that there was more corn in the granaries than in most former years, and that thus they would not be hurried into that feeling of hopelessness and desperation which the statements of the First Minister

of the Crown were so well calculated to create. Now, Sir, I come to the address of the French Minister of Commerce to the Prefects of France. He writes on the 15th November—

"I deem it useful to fix our opinion on the subject, in order that you may guard against exaggerations, and to furnish you with the means of reassuring the people, always so easily alarmed in matters relating to provisions."

How different is this from the course pursued by the Ministers of England! Then he goes on to show what probability there is of a deficiency in the present year's provisions as compared with the last; and he argues that every year, at the same period, the prices have a tendency to rise, but that at the beginning of another year they begin to fall again. I remember a statement also made by the Minister of Commerce, in which he said that alarm had been created by the state of the potatoes in Ireland; but the news which the day before, that is, on the 14th of November, he had received, assured him that this cry of a potato famine in Ireland had been greatly exaggerated. Thus, Sir, so far back as the moment when the Minister of England was exciting the greatest alarm in this country, the Minister of Agriculture and Commerce in France was assuring his country that he had ascertained that the statement with regard to the famine in Ireland was altogether exaggerated. But, Sir, I have other authorities, showing how much and how fully the facts have been exaggerated. Mr. Campbell Foster, the *Times* Commissioner, in one of the last letters he addressed to that paper, says—

"We must also remember that the cry about an Irish 'famine' does not proceed from uninterested parties. The Irish peasantry will make a 'poor mouth' because they hope to get some of England's bounty, and to escape paying their rent. The Irish landlords generally have no reason to contradict the cry in this country, for if John Bull is persuaded that the Irish are starving, his sympathies will be roused, and whatever he pays or gives to Ireland will find its way to the landlords' pockets eventually; at any rate, it will stop a hole in the gap of necessity, which they must fill up themselves if John Bull does not, for the peasant will consume the rent rather than starve. And lastly, at this juncture, Sir Robert Peel and the Government listen favourably to such an outcry, for it greatly aids the success of their measure regarding the Corn Laws."

Here, then, in this disposition favourably to listen to the cry of famine in Ireland do we find the cause of those reports which have exaggerated so much the state of Irish scarcity and famine. But while upon this subject we have 414 reports from 414 districts in Ireland, I want to know why we

have not the other reports received from other districts laid before us? Sir, I have now stated my reasons for thinking that, at least as regards Ireland, no new information has sprung up which at all justifies Her Majesty's Ministers in dealing with the Corn Laws. I have shown that, as regards Prussia, as regards France, and as regards America, the vague promises which were held out by Her Majesty's Ministers, that, by adopting these free-trade measures, we should encourage the Governments of those countries to relax their restrictions in favour of our trade, have all been disappointed; and therefore that, unless Her Majesty's Minister can get up a show that there are some new facts which he can bring to our knowledge, not yet imparted to the House, I think, Sir, I am justified in opposing your leaving the chair, and in moving that you leave the chair this day three months.

SIR R. PEEL: Sir, I shall, in the first place, notice that part of the speech of the noble Lord, the concluding part, which referred to the position and circumstances of Ireland; and I certainly did little expect, after the information that has been laid upon the Table by Her Majesty's Government, not an unfair selection of facts as the noble Lord states, but the full and entire reports received from the Scarcity Commissioners appointed by Government—I say, Sir, that I did not expect any hon. Gentleman would now rise in this House and deny the allegations contained therein. I know very well that scarcity is not universal in that country. I know that there are parts of that country in which the disease which has generally attacked the potato either does not exist at all, or at least does not exist to that calamitous extent which prevails in other parts; and you may find gentlemen living in the immediate vicinity of those more favoured parts, writing letters with the view of showing that there is, after all, no great rise in the price of these necessary articles of food. You may multiply those letters from particular counties, which, as far as they go, appear to give a contradiction to the facts which we have laid before you. Nevertheless, it is, I say, impossible to doubt the statement that there does exist in that country great scarcity—that there does exist much disease, growing out of that scarcity of food, in many parts to almost an unparalleled extent. The remedy which we are now applying to those evils is the purchase of food in order to provide subsistence to a population who would otherwise be subject to the most frightful

privations. Out of what source do those means come? Is there a great fund at the disposal of Government applicable to the purchase of food for the subsistence of the Irish people? No; the source from which these purchases have been made is the taxation of the United Kingdom. The noble Lord says, "Why, there were six hundred tons of potatoes brought out of Ireland for the supply of Liverpool and Bristol." Is it the remedy the noble Lord would propose, to interrupt this natural supply of food for this country, by purchasing it out of the money raised by the general taxation of the kingdom? The noble Lord charges us with indifference, because we did not purchase from this stock which has been sent for the ordinary supply of the people of this country. There have been, no doubt, reductions of prices in some of the Irish markets; but how has this been caused? Why, because we have been purchasing large quantities of Indian meal, and thereby checking the price of potatoes by the supply we have kept up of that article—an article of food purchased by us with the public money. I refer, Sir, to the several reports which have been laid upon the Table; and I ask the noble Lord whether he thinks that there is a universal conspiracy on the part of these gentlemen in Ireland to misrepresent the condition of that country? whether he thinks they have conspired to state that famine and disease do exist, when the real fact is there is no foundation for such assertions? We have not withheld from the knowledge of this House all the information that has reached us; and the House will judge whether we are justly chargeable with any exaggeration of facts for the purpose of facilitating the passing of the Corn Law measure. The noble Lord says, that we are countenancing delusion. Now, that is rather a heavy charge. How came the noble Lord himself to say, that he would consent to an extraordinary measure, namely, that he would permit for a period the importation of food into Ireland free of duty? Did not the noble Lord give a willing consent to the adoption of such a course? Well, then, you believe that that would be a remedy for the evils of Ireland; and yet, the noble Lord believes that there is no foundation for stating that famine exists in Ireland. Well, then, if that be so, what could induce the noble Lord to consent to such an extraordinary measure as allowing the importation of foreign corn and provisions into Ireland free of duties? If it is the duty of the Legislature to un-

deceive the people, and not to countenance delusions, it is clearly incumbent on those who, entertaining the same opinions as the noble Lord, see no necessity whatsoever for any change in the law, to resist the proposition for such an extraordinary measure as that. [Lord G. BENTINCK: Hear, hear!] I confess I do not quite understand that cheer. This is what the noble Lord says—

“I believe that the importation of foreign provisions into Ireland duty free would be no remedy whatever for the present evil. I believe what the people of Ireland want is the money to purchase that food, which I think is abundant; but still I will consent to such a measure for the present.”

The noble Lord, however, now says that there is no particular necessity in Ireland for any such change in the law. He says—

“I do not think that there is any necessity for resorting to extraordinary measures. I think that a resort to extraordinary measures would but have the effect of countenancing the existing delusion, and of keeping up the price of food.”

And yet the noble Lord is ready to countenance that delusion by permitting the importation of provisions into Ireland duty free. Am I wrong in saying that the noble Lord is ready to consent to such a step? And upon what ground? Why, because the Irish Members wished it. Well, but they could only have wished it under a strong impression that there was a necessity for such a measure. Among the whole body of Irish Members there was such an alarm on account of the scarcity of food in Ireland, that they felt it was necessary, in order to procure an adequate supply, to ask for the suspension of the law which imposes duties upon foreign provisions. The noble Lord then, it appears, believes that the Irish Members, generally, wish for such an extraordinary measure; and he is, therefore, willing to consent to it on this ground. The noble Lord at one time thinks that there is a conspiracy to deceive this House; and at another he is willing to trust to the assurances of the Irish Members that this scarcity does exist. I was certainly under the impression that the noble Lord did feel there was a scarcity of food in Ireland to justify the extraordinary measure to which he had consented, because I perceived that he did not express his willingness to yield in the same way to the opinions of the Irish Members on another subject—those Members that are opposed to the passing of the Coercion Bill. A case I considered was proved—that there was a necessity for the Coercion Bill: that case was established against the wishes and the opinions of the

majority of the Irish Members. Notwithstanding the expression of such opinions, the noble Lord refused to oppose that Bill. If, however, the noble Lord really thinks that there is no cause for these statements as to scarcity in Ireland, and that nevertheless he is willing to consent to the extraordinary measure of suspending the law which imposes duties upon foreign provisions imported into Ireland, in deference to the opinions and the wishes of the Irish Members, why in like manner did he not conform to the opinions expressed by the same Members in reference to the Coercion Bill? Why did he permit himself “to countenance the delusion which was calculated to raise the price of food, and to aggravate the evils of that country?” Sir, you will find that this Irish case will not be limited to this year. The temporary suspension of the law, as far as Ireland is concerned, is not sufficient. You will find in the course of this year a much smaller quantity of land dedicated to the growth of potatoes than at any former year. This has arisen—first, from the unwillingness of the farmers to let their land on conacre, for fear of not receiving their rent for it; and, secondly, from the apprehensions in the minds of the cottier and peasant, that the same disease would affect the potato in this year that so generally prevailed in the crops of last year. You must, therefore, calculate upon the probability of this pressure extending beyond the month of August next; and next year we will have to provide again for a deficient supply. So far, then, as Ireland is concerned, I absolutely deny that there has been any exaggeration on the part of the Government. I peremptorily deny that there has been anything like intentional exaggeration on our part for the purpose, as has been alleged, of facilitating the passing of the present measure. A Government that sees the progress of this disease, and is responsible for the well-being and protection of the people from famine and scarcity, has highly important and responsible duties to perform, which, if neglected, and those reasonable precautions not adopted, intolerable evils must consequently be felt which might have been obviated. Universal condemnation would be naturally pronounced against the Government that should run that risk, and neglect these reasonable precautions. And this censure is now lavished upon us by the noble Lord and his party for what they call our superfluous precautions. With ten times more force and ten times more jus-

tice would this censure be applicable, if, presuming these reports before us to be true, we had neglected the precautions of increasing the supply of food in Ireland. The noble Lord says, I stated the other night that in the course of this discussion, the opinion which I had entertained upon the subject had undergone a change, and that those restrictions which I some time since thought impolitic, I now believe to be unjust. Sir, I adopt and deliberately repeat that statement. I do believe the restrictions upon the importation of food to be inconsistent with justice and sound policy. The noble Lord may have a right to blame me for making that discovery at so late a period, and may say that I ought to have seen this injustice at least three or four years ago. I admit, Sir, that those who have intuitive perception to tell them that which is right in respect to matters relating to commercial policy—I admit, Sir, that those who, after patient and deliberate consideration, adopt at once the right course, are much more entitled to the credit attending such a course of policy, than others who, at a later period of life, adopt their sentiments. But it is the duty of those who have reason to change their opinions, to have the manliness to come forward and own their convictions. Sir, I think it is dishonest for a man, after being convinced upon a particular subject, to endeavour to gain credit for consistency, by being either unwilling or afraid to admit the change. I admit that this alteration in my opinions may disentitle me to the noble Lord's confidence; but I must recollect that the question for the country is not a personal one. It is not a question as to what period a man has changed, or ought to change his political opinions. The real question is—are these measures consistent with justice and sound policy? That, Sir, is the only question which we have now to consider. If you blame me for not having discovered sooner the necessity of such a measure as the present, you may say that this circumstance disentitles me to your confidence; but that will not enable you to escape the necessity of arguing this question on account of personal imputations. Are these restrictions politic and just? I have no hesitation in saying, I do not think they are consistent with justice. But the noble Lord says, I ought now to state the grounds for this opinion. I had no reason to believe that this discussion would have come on to-night. I thought that it was to be taken upon the third reading; and I had

not the slightest reason to suppose that the noble Lord, in the exercise of his discretion, would have made a demand on me at any period of this discussion for the grounds of my opinion. But, as the noble Lord requires me to do so, I will assign the grounds upon which, after mature consideration, after hearing these debates, and even after having listened to the speeches of the noble Lord himself, I have come to the conclusion that these restrictions are not politic, and are not consistent with justice. I do not think that you can defend any restrictions upon the importation of food—that is, to increase the natural price of food by legislative intervention, except on some great public reasons connected with the public good. I think, Sir, the presumption is against those restrictions. The natural presumption, I think, particularly in the House of Commons, which has already adopted the principle of freedom from restriction in respect to almost all other articles of importation, is in favour of the unrestricted importation of food. Consistency on the part of the House requires that the same principle that has been applied to almost all other articles of foreign produce shall be applied in like manner to food, unless you can, for some reason connected with the general and the permanent welfare of the country, establish a distinction between food and all other articles of produce. You must in fact show that it is for the general interest of the country that these restrictions should continue. Sir, it is because I cannot with truth allege that if you establish free trade in corn, you will probably become dependent upon foreign nations for your supply of the necessaries of life—it is because I do not believe that the rate of wages varies directly with the price of food—it is because I cannot persuade myself that with respect to the intelligent farmers, it can be considered that this protection is necessary to agricultural prosperity—it is because I cannot establish these facts, I have come to the conclusion that the natural presumption in favour of unrestricted importation ought to prevail, and therefore that it is unjust to continue these legislative restrictions upon food. I feel it absolutely incumbent on me to maintain one or other of these propositions. I have listened to the argument that in this country, with a very heavy taxation, there was a reason for the continuance of the duties upon the import of corn. Upon mature consideration and reflection, I believe that argument to be totally without foundation.

I believe it is impossible to assign the high rate of taxation as a valid reason for continuing the duties. I believe it to be illogical to contend that because the great mass of the community are heavily taxed, and necessarily heavily taxed, in respect to the consumption of many of their commodities, therefore that is a good reason why they should also be taxed in the price of their corn. I do believe, also, that by increasing the resources from which you draw your supply of food, by bringing it from the United States, from Odessa, from the Baltic; by increasing the number of countries in different latitudes which can feel an assurance that the British market will be open to them, and that there will be no operation of a sliding-scale to exclude their produce; you will receive supplies from so many sources, that dependence on any one nation will be impossible. I cannot contend that the probability of dependence upon foreign nations constitutes a reason for maintaining the Corn Laws. Look now at the different classes of the community. Take, first, the manufacturing population. Is it just towards them to continue these laws? Can we maintain, by argument, that the great mass of that population which depends for the means of purchasing its subsistence upon daily labour, and are employed in manufactures—can we contend that they are interested in the maintenance of these laws? If you tell me that the maintenance of these laws will ensure them a more abundant supply of corn at a low price—not this year, or the next, but taking the average of a series of years—that the maintenance of these restrictions will ensure the abundant supply of corn at a lower, or, if you will, at an equal price; I admit that is an argument for their continuance; but I do not admit that your argument is well founded; and when I am asked, as I have been continually, what do I calculate the price of wheat hereafter will be, and whether it will not disturb the Tithe Composition Act; and, as the Corn Laws are calculated to bring 56s., do I not calculate it as highly probable that the price of corn hereafter will be 40s.—when I am asked these questions, they afford a strong presumption, that in the minds of those who put them the unrestricted import of foreign corn will have a tendency, if not to reduce the price of food, to prevent any considerable increase of the price? The apprehension that the Tithe Composition Act will be permanently deranged by

permitting the free importation of wheat, must proceed on the assumption that the calculations are erroneous, and that wheat hereafter will be at a low price. With respect to the great manufacturing population, can we contend that it is for their interest that the price of wheat should be enhanced by restrictions upon corn? I do not believe that the price of food will be enhanced by the removal of these restrictions—I do not believe the removal of the restrictions will have a tendency to increase fluctuations. I believe, therefore, that the great mass of the manufacturing population will be doubly benefited by the removal of these restrictions: first, by increasing the demand for those manufacturing articles upon which their labour is expended; and, in the next place, by giving them, from the wages which they receive, a greater command over the necessities and comforts of life. I think that will be the double operation of this repeal in the Corn Laws; and, therefore, as far as that part of the population is concerned, I cannot maintain the continuance of restrictions on the ground of benefit to them. Now, with respect to the community at large, consider the article wheat, and the producers of that article, for whom principally these restrictions are to be maintained, maize being already admitted duty free, there remain only oats and barley, besides wheat, on which the duty falls; and I apprehend there is no such danger of competition, in barley at least, as would lead us to expect a great diminution of the price of barley by increasing the supply from abroad. There remain, then, wheat and oats, and principally wheat, for which the restrictions are maintained. Let us consider what parts of this country, and how much of it, are districts producing wheat. I apprehend that no one will dispute that the wheat plant requires to ripen it a considerable heat of the sun; and if you were to divide Great Britain by a line drawn from Inverness to Southampton, I think you will find the wheat-growing districts to be, to a considerable extent, to the eastward of that line. I do not mean to say, that to the westward of that line, as in Somersetshire and Shropshire, you will not find wheat-growing districts; but, speaking generally, both in Scotland and England, you will find the wheat-growing districts to be to the eastward of a line drawn from Inverness to Southampton. I say, then, that all that portion of the country which lies to the westward of the line has no in-

terest in the restrictions on the importation of wheat. I do not apprehend that the agricultural portion of Lancashire is at all interested in maintaining the restrictions on the importation of wheat; and my belief is, that the wheat-growing districts of this country are, comparatively speaking, a particular portion of this country, on account of its exposure on the eastern coast, and freedom from the humidity of the western coast; and that with respect to a great portion of this country—nearly half of it—it would be difficult to show that the agricultural interest gains any advantage from a law which increases the price of food. I think the noble Lord himself read me a pretty strong lesson the other night to show that Ireland is not much interested in the continuance of these restrictions, because the noble Lord on a former night described the position of the Irish farmer to be this. He said that Lord Essex had declared, that a farmer with large capital and much skill might contend against unrestricted import; but Lord Essex, speaking of farmers without capital and much skill, said it would be difficult for them to contend against unrestricted import; that there are 588,000 farmers in Ireland, and that they will answer the description, speaking generally, as a mass of persons without capital, and certainly without skill. Well, then, I ask, what has protection done for them? Is it the fact that there are at this moment 588,000 persons employed in the promotion of agriculture in Ireland, with their families dependent upon them; and that it can be truly asserted of them that they are farmers without capital and without skill? If it can be asserted generally of the farmers of Ireland, as a class, that they are men without capital and skill, can we contend that protection has been for their interest? To make the assertion that they have realized no capital, is a very strong proof that protection has not been for their benefit. Then, with respect to the agricultural labourer. Can we say that protection has operated for his advantage? Ireland is peculiarly agricultural; can it be said that the agricultural labourer has flourished in Ireland? Is it not the case, that in the part of the country where the agricultural labourer most abounds, he has been suffering from scarcity and the pressure of hunger? What is the answer made to our statement of the sufferings of the people of Ireland? "This is nothing extraordinary—this is nothing unusual—this is nothing out of the common course of na-

ture; every year this is the same; there are districts where, every year, the potato crops fail, where it is impossible to make the two ends meet; the potatoes fail in June or early in July, and from that time till the new crop is dug up the labourer is obliged to subsist upon charity, or whatever means will suffice for the purpose of maintaining life." If that be, as you say, the normal state of the Irish agricultural labourer—if that be his ordinary condition, and therefore we are not justified in an extraordinary remedy—can we contend that protection to agriculture has been greatly for the benefit of the agricultural classes in Ireland? Take it as you will—either that the present is an especial case, and then our special remedies are justifiable; or if, on the other hand, you are correct that there is always prevailing throughout six months in the year destitution and famine—admitting your allegations to be correct, can you have a stronger impeachment of the state of the law under which this is the condition of the agricultural labourer? I cannot admit, then, that the continuance of these restrictive laws is advantageous to the manufacturing interest, or for the interest of that class in Ireland which is immediately connected with them. With respect to the agricultural class here, I do not deny that this change in the law will be altogether unaccompanied by distress. I cannot deny that so great a change can be made without involving some in distress. I deeply regret it. I wish it were possible to make any change in any great system of law without subjecting some persons to distress; but is it not the fact that the parties who will be most distressed of all will be those who have neither science, nor skill, nor capital? Is it possible permanently to maintain a law which cannot be shown to be advantageous to the men of science, capital, and skill, but which can only be maintained in order to give the means of subsistence to those who have not science, capital, and skill? Should we be justified in maintaining these laws, and taxing the food of the great body of the community, on the allegation, not that they are necessary for the protection of agriculturists who have science and skill, but that they are necessary for the protection of those who go on adhering to the old system, and have neglected the means of improvement? If you cannot permanently maintain the laws, my firm impression is that the sooner you make known to the country what is your ultimate decision the

better. I believe that the bulk of the agricultural interest is also of that opinion. I believe that the agricultural interest is desirous of ascertaining the ultimate decision of Parliament with respect to the present system. That is my decided opinion. I believe that the agriculturist with capital and with skill, not only derives no advantage from these laws, but is subject to prejudice on account of them. I believe he has no interest in the maintenance of them. I do not deny that in these cases of change, from the absence of capital and from the absence of skill, there might be, and probably must be, some temporary suffering; but what I deny is, that you could found a permanent system of protection upon the necessity of protecting that class; and if you cannot found a permanent system upon that ground—if they are not for the advantage of capital and skill as applied to agriculture, their duration is, I believe, necessarily temporary; and if it be temporary, the sooner a permanent arrangement is made the better. ["Hear!"] The hon. Gentleman who interposes may have reason to show why the argument is worthless; but that is the ground on which I entertain the opinion that a real and permanent settlement of these Corn Laws is desirable for the whole community. The noble Lord says he wishes that the Minister of England would adopt the language of the Minister of France as to the advantage of maintaining a territorial aristocracy, considering the existence of a territorial aristocracy as essential to the maintenance of the Conservative principle. I am very much disposed to adopt the doctrine of the French Minister. I believe it to be of the utmost importance that a territorial aristocracy should be maintained. I believe that in no country is it of more importance than in this, with its ancient constitution, ancient habits, and mixed form of government. I trust that a territorial aristocracy, with all its just influence and authority, will long be maintained. I believe such an aristocracy to be essential to the purposes of good government. The question only is what, in a certain state of public opinion, and in a certain position of society, is the most effectual way of maintaining the legitimate influence and authority of a territorial aristocracy; and if I thought that the continuance of this protection law was essential to the maintenance of the territorial aristocracy, I should see in that very fact a difficult argument, but still a very strong ground for the maintenance of the

protection. I should see remote consequences to be attained, great social advantages to be procured, by an apparent departure from the strict principles that govern other branches of commercial policy; but what I doubt is, whether it be the real interest of a territorial aristocracy to attempt to maintain its authority by continuing the restriction on corn. There are certain periods in history when this can be done. The question is at present, will the just legitimate influence of the landed aristocracy be better maintained by consenting to forego this protection, or insisting upon the maintenance of it? My firm belief is, that you will more increase the just influence and authority of that body by now foregoing this protection than by continuing it. No author or statesman has dealt more fully and forcibly on this subject than Burke. And what does he say? Mr. Burke says, that it is absolutely essential that a territorial aristocracy should be maintained in this country; that it has taken the lead in all great measures of reform; and that, on the other hand, it has been the great strength and stay of a Conservative Government. He says, how is it that the territorial aristocracy of England has maintained this influence? Because, he answers, it has always identified itself with the people; it has never pertinaciously insisted on the maintenance of a privilege when the time for foregoing that privilege had arrived. He draws the contrast between the aristocracy of England, wisely consulting public opinion, relinquishing privilege when the time for the exercise of privilege had gone, and the territorial aristocracy of France, insisting upon the maintenance of privilege long after that period. On a former debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset compared me—and he thought he was passing a severe sarcasm; I thought it a compliment—he likened me to M. Turgot, and thought I was laying the foundation of revolution in this country by adopting and applying the principles of Turgot. Does my hon. Friend not feel that if the doctrines of Turgot had been applied at an earlier period—that if the aristocracy had not insisted on maintaining their privileges—that the revolution of France would not have been precipitated, and that the evils of that eventful period would have been diminished? Does not my hon. Friend feel that it was the unjust maintenance of bygone privileges that led to the revolution, rather than the doctrines

of Turgot? I infer that the privileges of a territorial aristocracy will not be diminished or its influence destroyed by consenting to a free trade in corn, because I firmly believe, speaking generally, that the aristocracy will sustain no injury from it whatever. I do not believe, as I said before, speaking generally, that the value of land, or the privileges of land, or the influence of land, will be diminished. Of this I am sure, that if it will not, you are establishing for the aristocracy a new claim upon the affection and sympathies of the people by making a sacrifice of your prejudices. If these laws are for the general benefit, it is wise to retain them; but if you entertain in your hearts the consciousness that agricultural prosperity is closely interwoven with your own prosperity—that in this complicated state of society you cannot tolerate, without serious danger to the land, a great and lasting check on our manufacturing prosperity; if you feel that, is it not, I ask, better for the permanent interest of a territorial aristocracy to make this concession freely, and at your own, rather than at the instance of the Minister. There are many privileges which the aristocracy had possession of, voluntarily abandoned, and with no loss whatever. Formerly it was one of the privileges of the aristocracy that the land alone should constitute a qualification for a seat in this House? That was an ancient privilege of the aristocracy. You might have urged that the abandonment of that was destructive of a territorial aristocracy—that the Constitution and long prescription required that the sole means of entering this House was by a piece of land. You found your law evaded; you found it inefficient for its purpose, and you willingly relinquished it. By relinquishing it, has the interest or influence of the aristocracy been diminished; or has not the timely abandonment of a nominal privilege conferred authority and power, much more than would have been conferred by insisting on an adherence to the ancient law? For two or three months, we have had before us the expectation of this great change. The country has known that, if this law should pass, there will, on the 1st February, 1849, be a duty only of 1s. on the importation of foreign corn. The people are a provident class. Let me ask, has the interest of landed property been affected? There have been farms out of lease. Has there been less demand for them? Is there not a conviction on the part of a tenant about to enter a farm

with capital and skill, that there has not been, for the last ten years, a period when he could enter upon the occupation of land with greater advantage than at present? There must be many gentlemen who have had farms out of lease; they must know whether the offers for them had diminished, and whether there has been a necessity for letting them at reduced rents. I said long ago, that I thought agricultural prosperity was interwoven with manufacturing prosperity; and depended more on it than on the Corn Laws. Continued reflection has confirmed me in that opinion. I believe that it is for the interest of the agriculturist that you should lay a permanent foundation of manufacturing prosperity; and as your land is necessarily limited in quantity, as your population is increasing, as your wealth is increasing, that the true interests of land are co-existent with the manufacturing and commercial prosperity. I see in the continued relaxation of commercial restrictions a new foundation laid for manufacturing and commercial prosperity; and therefore, I look forward to their indirect operation, and I believe you will find the value of land increased with the removal of these restrictions, and with additional opportunities for carrying on extended commerce. I believe that with respect to a great part of the community of this country, there is no direct interest in the continuance of these restrictions; that therefore they could only be maintained at the expense of continued and harassing contest. It is because I believe the interests, direct and indirect, of the manufacturing and agricultural classes to be the same—because I believe they all are interested in the extension of scientific agriculture, that I come to the conclusion that the natural presumption in favour of unrestricted import ought to prevail; and therefore it is that I think it would be inconsistent with justice, as well as with policy, to continue this prohibition. I have now, Sir, attempted to answer the questions put by the noble Lord, and to assign the reasons why, after an extended review of the subject, and of the elements which enter into it, and after the best reflection I can give to the whole matter, I now deliberately repeat what I stated at the outset—that I believe restrictions on commerce to be impolitic and unjust. I have now come, Sir, to that conclusion; and I am sorry it was not fixed in my mind at an earlier period. The noble Lord and

those who act with him retain their impressions on this question. They have, undoubtedly, a right to act on those impressions, and I dare say their views may be more just than my own; but it is my duty, even if I should lose their good opinion and their confidence, however sincerely I should deplore it—I still feel it is my duty to avow my opinions, and not to persevere in retaining restrictions which in my conscience I cannot justify. The noble Lord has referred to our relations with foreign countries as to commerce, and he has said that the promises which I held out some few months ago have not been fulfilled. Why, considering that this Bill is only now going into Committee, and considering also the declaration of the noble Lord, or his confident prediction that either here or elsewhere the Bill will be defeated—that it will never pass into a law—considering, I say, all these facts, I think it would be deemed very precipitate on the part of foreign countries if they made, as contingent on our acts, the relaxations in their commercial system which the noble Lord said I prophesied might take place. But, Sir, at the same time I must say there are countries which have shown a willingness to follow our example. Since I first declared my opinions on this subject the commercial system of the Two Sicilies has been materially modified. I admit that Sicily is a small country; but still, as I said before, we could not well have expected—considering the little progress we had made with our measures for relaxation—that any great or important change would consequently be made in the commercial system of other countries. With respect to France, the noble Lord said, I promised that France would adopt principles of commercial relaxation. Sir, I did not promise any such thing. What I said was this, that I gave credit to the French Government for being too enlightened to wish to continue their restrictions upon British manufactured articles; but that I believed the Government were controlled in their desires by persons in the two Chambers who were directly interested in the maintenance of restrictive duties. And, Sir, I added that I thought ultimately the wishes of the Government, backed and supported by the opinions of the enlightened men of France, would, at no remote period, prevail over partial and particular interests, and lead the way to the adoption in France of a better system of commer-

cial laws. I did not promise that a relaxation of the French commercial system would take place immediately; but what I then said I now believe. I believe, Sir, that in France, and in other countries too, the interests of the great body of consumers will at no remote period be better considered and attended to, and that a system of general relaxation with respect to commerce will ultimately be adopted; and, I believe further, that if you adopt the motto of advancing in commercial freedom, instead of receding, you are likely to diminish the power of that portion of the community in France who have a direct influence in retaining restrictive duties on British manufactures. I know that there are societies formed in France of commercial men for the purpose of promoting a freer system of commercial intercourse; and I believe they will be able to show that the people are not interested in buying bad and dear hardware, bad cottons, and bad linens, instead of having good and cheap articles of that description from this country; and I believe, moreover, they will be enabled to prove that the great mass of the French people would be benefited by a more open system of commercial enterprise. But, Sir, I never promised, knowing, as I do, the strength of the protecting interests in the French Chambers, that France would at once yield to the influence of reason. I am not, however, the less confident that if you set the example, your example will be followed, and will ultimately prevail. The subject will be discussed in France, and after a lapse of time—not at once, not immediately, but when it is understood by the people—a liberal system of commercial policy will be adopted. The same, I believe, will be the case in the United States. There is a movement in the public mind on this subject in almost every country; and the example of England, as it told in favour of restriction, so will it tell in respect to freedom of commerce. What have we to lose by our example? "Why," says the noble Lord, "we are going to take the silk and other manufactures of France and her brandy. Adopt a different course, and let your Motion be retrograde—recede from what you have done, and say that you are in the wrong, and you will by so doing countenance in every country in the world the influence of restrictive principles." The noble Lord says we are about to take these manufactures, and also the corn and timber of

Prussia, and that we are to get nothing in return; but if we get nothing in return, what do we suffer by the precedence? Upon what principle has the noble Lord formed his opinion with regard to the manner in which foreign commercial transactions are conducted? We shall not get these bad brandies, as the noble Lord calls them, and silks and other articles, the productions of France, for nothing; we must give something in return for them. There is no mode by which we can purchase these things except by giving something as an equivalent. Supposing we gave gold for them, would evil ensue? If there has been any diminution in the quantity of gold, it has been caused by supplying the internal wants of the commerce of the country, and not by being remitted in extravagant quantities to other nations for the purpose of buying corn or timber. But I am going to say what will alarm you still more—I wish it had. How do you get your gold? I believe this country will always be able to command a sufficient supply for her own wants; and if France and Prussia will take nothing but gold, that gold can only be procured for your manufactures, and a very good bargain you will make by exchanging your manufactures for it; and therefore if your allegations are correct, and you do make these purchases with gold, I am not very much alarmed if your export from this country is gold, knowing as I well do from the ordinary transactions of commerce, that no such export will take place as can derange the commercial interests of the Empire. The noble Lord has, as I before mentioned, talked of our taking the bad silks and the bad brandies of France; but the brandy of France is well known to be a better article than we can procure at home; and I conceive that by promoting the qualified import of it—by giving freer access to the brandy and silks of France, we shall inflict no wound whatever on the commerce of this country; but, on the contrary, enable the consumers of those articles to apply the saving in the price to other and perhaps more useful purposes. I freely admit if France were wise enough to see that she would be benefited by free interchange of commerce, the advantage to all parties would be greater; but if the double benefit cannot be obtained, let us not deny ourselves the benefit of the single one; let us not pay a greater price for inferior articles because we cannot induce France to buy good articles at a low

price. If, therefore, there be not an immediate reciprocal advantage, I am perfectly content to rely on the ultimate result of the present course of policy taken by Her Majesty's Government; and I shall, notwithstanding any temporary obstacles, look forward to the force of the example of England in relaxing her commercial laws upon the principle of restriction held up by other nations; and when the attention of the people of these nations is called to the subject, I retain with confidence the impression that at no remote period these principles will ultimately prevail; and I therefore reiterate to you my advice on this question—that advice which the noble Lord has condemned—that you should take for your motto, "Advance, and do not recede in the course of your commercial policy."

House went into Committee. Preamble postponed.

MR. GEORGE BANKES said, that the right hon. Baronet had observed that he anticipated that no discussion would have taken place in that stage of the Bill; but his right hon. Friend had perhaps forgotten the very emphatic declaration he made on the last occasion when the subject of the Corn Laws was introduced; and as no previous opportunity had offered for any of his (Mr. Bankes's) friends near him to make any observations on that point, they felt called upon to do so now. It could not escape observation that there was a very important distinction between the present and the former declarations of the right hon. Baronet made a few weeks or months ago; for then he said that he had been led to the conclusion that the maintenance of these laws could not be continued in regard to public policy; but now he said that he believed the maintenance of these laws was unjust. It would have been singular indeed if the first opportunity was not taken by some of those who entertained the same views which had been so long and ably advocated by his right hon. Friend, however little qualified they might be to tread in the steps which he had taken, and in which he had induced them to follow him, if they did not remark on what had taken place. It became them, if they saw no reasons for change, and could not find any in the arguments which his right hon. Friend now used, which would serve as an answer to those he had so often put forward on former occasions—it became them to express their regret at this change of opinion on the part of his

right hon. Friend, which indeed seemed to have been brought about with a view of keeping ahead of the noble Lord opposite, and to unarm him in his career. He was bound to give every credit to the declarations of one so eminent and distinguished and of such high character as his right hon. Friend, and no taunt should fall from him as to the change in his opinions. He could only give utterance to sentiments of regret, when he found so striking a blow as he feared it would prove to the confidence to be placed by those conscious of inferior abilities in looking out for a leader of great influence in a party. He would only express his sincere sorrow at the loss of such a guide; but he saw no adequate reason for any change of opinions as given in the speech which had just been delivered. He saw no new lights: for he had heard the same arguments which he had just listened to often put forward by men of inferior acquirements to the right hon. Baronet, but still men of great ability; but which were resisted by his right hon. Friend in arguments which he thought were a complete reply to anything he had now said. He would not put the former speeches of his right hon. Friend in juxtaposition to those which he had recently made; but he must say that he strongly felt that the opinions expressed in the former speeches had brought conviction to his mind of their soundness, and that the arguments then used were the best grounded. It appeared to him that the arguments which his right hon. Friend had set out with addressing to his noble Friend, though loudly cheered by the opposite side, had no weight. What was the state of the case? The other night, in answer to a question put to his noble Friend by the hon. Member for Limerick, as to how far those who sat near him, and who acted under him as a leader, were inclined to adopt a particular course as to the alleged state of want of food in Ireland—his noble Friend, with a degree of caution highly becoming him, in the reply which he made to the question for the allowing the free importation of foreign corn into Ireland for a certain period, said, that, although he could not see any possible benefit that would result from it, and although he would not bind himself to any such delusions, and although he did not believe that any benefit would accrue to Ireland from any such experiment; still, to prevent himself and those who acted with him from being charged with interposing obstacles to the relief of the alleged state

of distress in Ireland, he said that if the Government would propose a measure of this kind, and the Members for Ireland, on their responsibility as representatives of that country stated that they believed that it would be for the benefit of Ireland, he and those with whom he acted would assent to the experiment being tried. He saw no grounds on this occasion which could justify the right hon. Gentleman in his taunts for acceding to the request. If the Government thought that it would be beneficial to take such a course, why did they not concede the request of the hon. Member for Limerick? And if they saw no benefit that would result from it, why had they held the language which they did night after night, and say that those who objected to this Bill were delaying aid to the distressed people of Ireland? Where were the cheers of the Treasury bench now? Such language, such speeches, had been by no means unfrequent at the commencement of these debates, but they had grown "small by degrees, and beautifully less;" and those were not the arguments which the Government now used. If, therefore, nothing else had been gained by the proposal of the hon. Member for Limerick, they were at least obliged to him for this—that that line of argument was stopped. Nothing was now said about delaying relief to Ireland. That had received its answer, and they might cheer the reply as long as they pleased. Believing the hon. Member for Limerick to be sincere in his persuasion that such a measure would be beneficial for Ireland, he thought that the hon. Member would have had good reason to complain if this question had been answered in any other manner; and, therefore, he repeated, that he could see nothing to regret in the answer which his noble Friend had been authorized to give by so numerous a party, with all their hearts wishing that good might flow from it, but fearing that none could result. Had they been the originators of the proposal, as it was one from which they did not expect any benefit, they would have been open to the blame of hollow insincerity in making it; but the case was very different when they were applied to by others to consent to it. The right hon. Baronet had referred to observations of his made on a former occasion, in which he had pointed out some resemblance between the position of certain French Ministers, and the present state of this question in the present Parliament: he saw no ground for withdrawing those observations; but

they were not spontaneously his; they were offered in answer to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, who had previously referred to those Ministers of France. At a very dangerous and critical period, great and eminent men as they were, and well qualified as they were in many respects for the stations which they filled, they unhappily wanted that peculiarly great quality, moral courage, the want of which did, in his opinion, lead to all the disasters that subsequently befell their country. Neckar was a Minister, than whom no man could be more amiable in private life—few more endowed with talents suited to his position: possessed of unbounded private wealth, he had no sordid interests to gratify, and the honesty of his principles was undoubted; but he wanted that great quality, which, being wanting in him, did prove the misfortune of his country; and between that Minister and the right hon. Baronet, he must say that there did appear to him strong points of resemblance. The great qualities of that man would be conceded to the right hon. Baronet by every one; but he feared that the right hon. Baronet had M. Neckar's failing also. He had certainly seen nothing of late to alter that opinion; and he confessed that the speech which he had heard that night had greatly tended to confirm it. When he heard the right hon. Baronet speak upon the subject of the bullion brought into this country, he was surprised, indeed, to find that he treated it as a matter of no importance at what price they bought it—what quantity of commodities they gave for it. Other opportunities would occur of addressing the House upon that subject, because another important stage of the Bill had to be passed before it could receive even the final sanction of that House; but he agreed with his noble Friend in thinking that this was a just and proper occasion to raise a discussion applicable to the new position which the Prime Minister had taken when he declared this to be no longer a question of policy, but a question of national justice. That was not, indeed, absolutely a new doctrine; for the last three or four years they had heard it from those who occupied a peculiar position, and had obtained a new and peculiar name. But it was a new and strange doctrine to hear from the Treasury benches—a doctrine which had not as yet been heard from the front row of the Opposition, but had been heard from those, and those only, who had chosen to adopt a peculiar name, and who, if this great change of policy were to take

place, did deserve that it should take place under the sanction and authority of that name; because by the great men whose opinion had so much changed upon this subject, no other reason for that change had been given except the formation of that League: and much as he regretted the late change of principles in leading public men, there was no ground upon which he so much regretted it as that it had not taken place in anticipation rather than in consequence of the formation of that League. It was unquestionable that the fortune of that League had given great encouragement to, and formed a bond of union between it and another association in the sister island; and that Irish Members came over and voted for the success of one League measure as the herald of the success of others. On that ground he deeply regretted the change of opinion which had so recently taken place; he did not say which had been so recently declared, because he was sure that the right hon. Baronet would feel it to be his duty to declare that change openly and honestly as soon as it occurred; and he did, therefore, deplore the consequence of those new opinions so recently formed, and consequently so recently declared, which had reduced the right hon. Baronet to his present position, and made him, instead of the leader of a great party, the follower only of those who had trod before him the path, and avowed the principles which he had so tardily adopted. Of this he was satisfied, that whilst there existed in the sister kingdom a similar confederacy, which yet had its success to gain, the course of policy which the right hon. Baronet was pursuing was a direct encouragement to them never to cease their exertions till they could boast a similar triumph. He could see no grounds for calling the refusal of this measure either unjust or impolitic; and it was now admitted with reference to Ireland that it had no immediate bearing upon her condition; nor, indeed, so far as he could collect, had it any distant bearing, but such as would operate prejudicially to that country. For those reasons, after having listened attentively to all that had been urged by those with whom he had been so long in the habit of acting, and for whom he felt the most sincere respect; and having heard nothing to alter his opinions, he was bound to maintain those principles which he had hitherto upheld, and to refuse his assent to the changes now proposed.

LORD J. RUSSELL: The hon. and

learned Member who has just sat down, has declared that he did not mean to taunt the right hon. Gentleman opposite with changing his opinion, and has stated that he believes the right hon. Gentleman's change of opinion to be sincere. At the same time I must say, that the speech of the hon. and learned Member was so much wanting in argument, and consisted so much of a repetition of what I considered taunt against the right hon. Gentleman opposite, that I do consider that that does form the staple of the objections which are felt to the course which the Government is now pursuing. I cannot but ask, supposing the right hon. Gentleman—as I think we may in justice to him suppose—to be sincere in the opinion he now professes—I cannot but ask, what course it was possible for him to pursue? Make as light as you please of the scarcity and disease of the potatoes in Ireland, still you must admit that in some parts of that country there does exist great distress. We have readily agreed to grants for the purpose of relieving that distress, and have admitted that relief was required by some extraordinary measure. Such being the case, those who are in favour of a change of the Corn Laws would have argued—it is impossible for them not to have so argued—that this formed an additional ground for taking into consideration the Corn Laws. It would have been said, that large sums of public money have been laid out in, and a great portion of the taxes applied to, the relief of the people of Ireland, in cases where they are suffering from want of food; and yet you still maintain a law by which food is not admitted here from foreign countries which are willing to send it us. If the right hon. Gentleman opposite had thought that these Corn Laws ought to be maintained under all circumstances, he might have brought forward an argument for their maintenance; but if such is not his opinion—if he feels that these laws could not be maintained to the advantage of this Empire—how intolerable would have been the position of the right hon. Gentleman if he had attempted to defend these laws, and had asked only for temporary remedies and temporary grants for relief? What other course could the right hon. Gentleman, as the Minister of a great country, take—holding the opinions he professes, and I believe sincerely professes, that this question ought to be finally settled—than that which he has taken? No doubt this is not consistent with the

course the right hon. Gentleman took before; and the hon. and learned Gentleman says, with great satisfaction, “I see no reason to change my opinion.” I think we have heard arguments in variety for the last few years, which I need not endeavour now to repeat, sufficient to show that these Corn Laws have produced great evil in this country, and that in times of distress, when food was dear, mortality and crime have increased in proportion to the dearth of food. I know but one example like the consistency which the hon. and learned Gentleman would seem to recommend, and that is contained in the novel of *Gil Blas*. I recollect that *Gil Blas*, when assistant to Dr. Sangrado, says to his master, “I have now been your assistant for some months, and I see that every case ends fatally; we have tried bleeding and hot water whether the patient was a young person or old, whether the illness was sudden or of long standing, and the termination has always been the same; we have effected no cure; our treatment has only increased the disease and ended in death.” And then Dr. Sangrado replies, “It is quite true; there is not a case in which we have effected a cure; my treatment seems to have no good result; but I have written a book to show that it is the only cure, and therefore it is impossible to change it.” The hon. and learned Gentleman seems to be alarmed at the prospect of evils approaching us, and it appears that he has found a great likeness between the right hon. Gentleman opposite and M. Neckar. I confess I do not see those points of resemblance to which the hon. and learned Member has alluded, or any resemblance between the abolition of the Corn Laws and the commencement of the French Revolution. Neither do I believe that Neckar was the cause of the French Revolution; though I am no admirer of his wisdom, firmness, or talent. I believe that the causes of the French Revolution were the oppression of the people of France, and the abuses which so long continued. These were the causes of the French Revolution; and I entirely agree in those observations which the right hon. Gentleman quoted from Burke, to the effect that the safety and the security of the aristocracy of this country depends on their wise observance of public opinion, and their determination not to maintain laws which the country feels convinced are injurious to it. I wish to maintain the landed aristocracy, and I do not wish to see them supplanted by any other class of

the community; but I think, with respect to these Corn Laws, that if the aristocracy went on from year to year maintaining laws which it could be shown had the effect of raising the price of corn grown on their own land, and thereby tending to increase their income; and if, as might be the case, the majority of the community came to be of opinion that the aristocracy were acting from such motives, there would then be no position so dangerous to them as the obstinate maintenance of those laws. And when these Corn Laws are done away with—when that date of February, 1849, arrives—in what respect will the landed aristocracy be in a worse position than they ought to be according to equity and just laws? They will not have any disadvantage by being deprived of the protection which other classes of the community have. The law is, generally speaking, to be equal to all. The aristocracy are not to have the advantage of protection for corn; neither are the manufacturers or commercial men to have protection or prohibition with reference to articles in which they deal. There is not, in that respect, therefore, to be any inequality. All parties are to be placed on equal terms; and with respect to other matters, I do not know any country in the world where any class has a position at once so honourable, so advantageous, and I would almost say, so easy to fulfil, as the English landed aristocracy. They are in the possession of great property, which has been increased enormously since the time when manufactures and commerce, towards the end of the last century, took a great start and made great progress. They have the advantage of competing for political power with all the other classes of the community, and they are able to obtain places in the House of Commons, whilst they nearly possess the whole of the House of Lords; and they have the further advantage which a civilized community, such as is to be found in this country, always carries with it. I must say that I do not know that there is any class in any country in the world which the English landed aristocracy have to envy; and if I were asked with respect to their political power, I should say, that while they competed with other classes of the community, which, likewise have acquired wealth, and likewise have intelligence, and are fitted to rise to the highest posts which British subjects can occupy under the Constitution, the English aristocracy may be proud to fill no other situ-

ation than that, which their own ability, exertions, and industry, and those of their forefathers, enable them to occupy. The hon. and learned Gentleman seems much alarmed at the idea that the country will have to pay very dearly for this boon of the abolition of the Corn Laws; and he appears afraid that we shall part with all the gold in the country. Wheat is to be brought from other countries, and it is said that the foreigners will take nothing but gold in exchange. But gold must be obtained somewhere; and so, if we have gold, we must give manufactures in exchange for it. But then it is contended that we do not know the price that must be paid for gold; but, for my part, I think that matter may be safely left to the manufacturers, who will know the price which gold naturally should bear. Therefore, I say that any alarm of that kind is really preposterous. In point of fact, there has been for several years a great quantity of wheat imported; at first there was an exportation of bullion and of specie, but after two or three years the course of trade became regulated, the export of our manufactures has increased, and these manufactures have been taken in exchange for corn. Such will be the result when trade is constantly carried on, as will be the case under the law which the right hon. Baronet has proposed. And now, Sir, I must say a few words on the question with regard to which the hon. and learned Gentleman has also spoken—namely, as to the division which has taken place between him and those who follow the noble Lord the Member for Lynn, and those who still follow the right hon. Gentleman the First Lord of the Treasury; and I must say, I do not think this difference of opinion has arisen for the first time during the present year. Whatever may be said, a difference of opinion has existed. It has appeared to me for years that the opinions of the right hon. Gentleman the First Lord of the Treasury, the opinions of the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for the Home Department, and the opinions of others who now act with them, have been exceedingly different from the opinions of the hon. and learned Gentleman who has just spoken, and of others who have acted with him during the present Session. Accordingly we have seen, from the first commencement of the Ministry, that there has been this great difference of opinion between them. The right hon. Gentleman the First Lord of the Treasury said, at the beginning of the present Session, that the

experience of the last three years of free trade, in certain articles, has convinced him of the propriety of proceeding in the same course; but if the right hon. Gentleman had been a friend of the protection so common on the part of the great body who vote for the maintenance of the Corn Laws, why were those experiments in free trade made? What could have induced those experiments in the commercial policy—the enlightened and the enlarged policy, as I think; but at all events, the commercial policy opposed to the views of the hon. Gentleman below the gangway? We have seen, in the course of the last few years, whether, with respect to this commercial policy, or the Canadian Corn Bill, or on religious questions, such as the Maynooth Bill, that there has been a great difference of opinion between the Government and those who, before they succeeded to office, were their most active and cordial allies. What is the conclusion to be drawn from this? The conclusion is, that though there was an union to put an end to the late Government—though there was a combination, there was no party united in their views of public policy. Therefore, I think, for the public interests, it is better, far better, that the right hon. Gentleman should entertain his views of public policy, and that those Gentlemen should fairly declare their views and the opinions they honestly entertain, and vote against the right hon. Gentleman. The hon. and learned Gentleman who has last spoken has referred to an association—meaning what is commonly known by the League, and of another association existing across the channel, with another object—the repeal of the Legislative Union. Now, I do beg the hon. and learned Gentleman to consider a little—as he has so very strong a dislike to yielding to associations, as he does not approve of the course of policy which has been agitated in our market places and in our streets for years; and as he thinks it wiser that improvements should commence with Parliament, and should be sent as law at once among the people, rather than that they should be the consequence of popular agitation—as I collect that to be his opinion—I wish that he, and those who act with him, would consider the experience of late years. For many years we contended for the question of Parliamentary reform. I remember, Sir, that I said in this House, if we did not allow it to flow on like a river, we must expect it to rush like a torrent. I was laughed at for

that expression; it was said to be an absurd and ridiculous expression. But when the Reform Bill was introduced, the popular fury rose to such a height that it would consent to nothing but the Bill; and it was then seen that it would have been wiser to have made some concession to the previous agitation. And, with regard to the subjects which may arise when the question of corn shall be settled, especially with respect to that country to which the noble Lord the Member for Lynn, and the hon. and learned Gentleman, have alluded, I hope that he and others will consider whether there may not be measures which it will be wise in Parliament to enact, before they are dictated by popular agitation. Of this I am sure, that if we mean, as I trust it is our destiny, to give a great example to the nations of the world—to teach the nations of the world how to live—we, the House of Commons, ought most deeply to consider which of our institutions and laws are founded upon truth, upon reason, and upon justice. You find fault with the right hon. Gentleman for now declaring the Corn Laws to be unjust. Why are they unjust? Because they are restrictions; and if they are not authorized and justified by the general safety and welfare of the country, we ought not to uphold what are otherwise unjust laws. And, if there are other laws which stand in the same position, do not wait till agitation shall render a change inevitable. Be wise beforehand. Profit by the example of Catholic emancipation, of the reform in Parliament, and of the Corn Laws, and endeavour to secure what alone can be maintained. Stand by the institutions that are good, and give timely correction to abuses which are unworthy of your support. This is the way, I am convinced, by which you will give a great and noble example, and by which, in the sight of all nations, it will be said, "Truly this is a great nation, this is a wise and understanding people."

MR. DISRAELI: Sir, my hon. Friend the Member for Dorsetshire has vindicated the noble Lord the Member for Lynn from the imputation cast upon him by the First Lord of the Treasury. I am surprised, indeed, that the motives which influenced the noble Lord could have been misinterpreted. My noble Friend came forward to propose the remedy which he thought was necessary for the state of Ireland. He admitted a partial exigency. He proposed a method which would meet that exigency. He believed there was a sys-

tematic and inveterate evil, and he indicated the measure which he thought was required to meet it. That was the position of my noble Friend. It was true my noble Friend said more, but it was obviously a *reductio ad absurdum*. He said, "You suggest a remedy which appeals to the passions of the multitude; which may be, and has been, misinterpreted in our multifarious debates: we will prove to you, that if we have recourse to your remedy it must be deficient." To dispel delusion was his object. "I will grant your premises," he said. "The people of Ireland shall not say that I and my friends are the bar to the enjoyment of these alleged advantages, though I guard myself from being described as one who has deceived them; for whilst I accede to the proposed boon, I tell them it must be worthless." Now to seize upon that in debate, and attack measures which, whether right or wrong, were measures which all must admit were of great importance, and worthy of public consideration: to seize, I say, upon a single point like that (which I think was a judicious point) was hardly worthy of so practised a Parliamentary orator as the right hon. Gentleman. The right hon. Gentleman has not said, indeed, that we blamed him for the precautions he has taken. I can hardly believe that any Gentleman on this side the House can blame the Government for their precautions. I am sure I have never ventured—I am also sure no Gentleman near me has ventured—to blame them for the precautions they have taken. If their precautions were exaggerated, I should say exaggeration is, under such circumstances, a merit. What we have blamed them for, is not for the precautions they have taken, but for the policy they have adopted. We have not blamed them for establishing hospitals; we have not blamed them for importing maize; we have not only not blamed them for taking such measures, but we have expressed our willingness to support them in any measures which they might recommend to meet the exigency. What we object to in Her Majesty's Ministers is this: that nothing can be more impolitic when they are called upon to meet an emergency, the fact of which we do not wish to examine—that they should, under such circumstance, call upon us to construct a new commercial policy, absolutely opposed to every principle which they have hitherto professed, and to every course which they themselves have recommended us to follow. The space was so

short between the last protection speech—the last, though not the least, able protection speech—made by the right hon. Gentleman at the termination of the last Session of Parliament, and his meeting us again with a new profession of political faith, that I think even if there were no other circumstances to justify it, he should have detached his emergencies from his new system. If it had only been to show some feeling for his late supporters—some wish to extricate them from an embarrassing position—they should not have been exposed to the accusation of not sympathizing with their suffering fellow subjects in the sister kingdom, because they objected to change their whole policy, and at once to act in opposition to doctrines which the right hon. Gentleman himself has always professed. The noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) who has just addressed the House, as well as the right hon. Gentleman, has assumed the case we have before us to be, whether we are prepared to oppose that which is for the interest of the multitude. I, for one, beg to say, I am not prepared to oppose any measures which I think are for the interest of the multitude. But that is not the real question before us. That, I say, is not the real question in this debate. I myself, and I can say so for many Gentlemen here—am quite guiltless of any intention of taking part in it, for I was perfectly unaware it would occur; but at the same time, I think the point my noble Friend has taken was not only a legitimate point, but a most necessary one to be taken. The observation of the right hon. Baronet had escaped me; but having made that observation, I think he can hardly be surprised the noble Lord should have taken an early opportunity to ask for an explanation of an expression so remarkable. I have not yet myself spoken on the new Corn Law of the right hon. Gentleman; I should be sorry, if a fair occasion offered, to shrink from an unequivocal expression of my opinions, or to endeavour to meet by argument, and not by assertion, the case of the right hon. Gentleman and the rest of Her Majesty's Ministers. It is not from a wish to avoid the difficulty in the present instance that I abstain; but I think it is obvious that, with an impending debate at hand, this is not the hour it could be expected or tolerated, that any Member should enter at length into that subject. It is only the cool assertions from each side the Table that have made

me feel it is not perhaps impertinent for me to rise, to notice the observations which have been made. I may say, that not being prepared for debate is not an excuse for not being prepared to answer the speech of the right hon. Gentleman. It is not a speech that I have heard for the first time. I have heard it in other places—in different localities, and, I may be allowed to add, from a master hand. That speech has sounded in Stockport; it has echoed in Durham. I suspect that there has been on the stage of the classical theatre a representation of it, upon the highest and finest scale; and, as is usual in such cases, the popular performance is now repeated by an inferior company. Especially, Sir, when I heard the line drawn which marks on the map the corn-growing districts of England. I thought I might say, as I have heard sometimes said upon Railway Committees upon rival lines, "That is surely the line of the hon. Member for Stockport." And so, when the right hon. Gentleman, with a fervour of mimetic rhetoric, which has been much developed of late, turns round, and says he has not the courage, and he is surprised that we have, to oppose that which is for the benefit of the multitude and the advantage of the people; that, I say, is not the question at issue. I am ready to meet the real question without any evasion. If the measures of the Government have not a tendency to occasion a great displacement of labour, a displacement of that kind of labour which is of the most permanent character—if they have not by that displacement a tendency to occasion great social suffering, and, ultimately, great political disaster, then I say they are good measures, and I for one am not prepared to oppose them. But that is the whole question, and that question at the right moment, at the fitting opportunity, with the permission and indulgence of the House, I am prepared to discuss. If I do not meet it now, I hope that no one will for a moment suppose that I admit the justice of the series of assumptions with which we have been favoured by the right hon. Gentleman. The right hon. Gentleman alluded to the state of Ireland, that 534,000 farmers are without capital, and then he turns round, in the manner of his great master, and says, "See what protection has produced." I shall be prepared, upon the proper occasion, to prove that protection has not produced the present condition of Ireland. That is an

enormous assumption. I might as well turn round to the right hon. Gentleman and say, "Had it not been for protection, those 534,000 farmers would not have existed." Nothing is so easy as to take instances of wretchedness and say protection has produced them. There is the eternal instance of the Wiltshire labourer with his 6s. or 7s. a week; and it is said, "See what protection has produced." I go into Lincolnshire, and I find the labouring man with ample means and flourishing—may I not turn round and say, "See what protection has produced?" These are questions which cannot be entered into without more time than, in an incidental debate like the present, can be appropriated to them; but when the right hon. Gentleman takes this occasion, with his great authority, to scatter arguments which, of course, influence public opinions, or rather to make statements—for he has not condescended to reason to-night, he has rather taken refuge in rhetoric—it is absolutely necessary they should be noticed, however partially. The right hon. Gentleman says, "How can you justify your system of protection, even if it did benefit to the agriculturist, to the manufacturer?" I can justify it; I resist altogether the inference that is sought to be drawn from the question put by the right hon. Gentleman. I say, unless by the system of protection, as described in this debate, the benefit to manufactures is as great as the benefit to agriculture, I agree with him, the objection to it is fatal, and he would not be a wise statesman that would not earnestly consider the consequences of it. I take this to be the case of the manufacturer. The late war and some preceding wars destroyed existing manufactures in many countries. Those in Europe and the United States are of modern origin. In no instance have those manufactures sprung from any other source than the capital that the system of protection allowed the landed proprietors to accumulate. It is that capital which has formed our own manufactures. That noble industry of the north of England, which is so often the subject of discussion in this House, the cotton manufacture, is as much owing to the agricultural capital of England, as it is to the genius of its great mechanical inventions, and even to its unprecedented local advantages which unites mines of coal and iron. In the early state of the cotton manufacture, it was the capital of Lombard Street that promoted the immense development of that fabric.

And what was the capital of Lombard Street? It was the capital of the farmers of Norfolk and Lincolnshire, which had found its way into Lombard Street, and was thence distributed by the great bankers and bill-brokers. I am speaking of transactions when a house like Gurney's, for example, would discount bills to the amount of half a million, all drawn upon and accepted by one firm, for the purchase of Manchester goods. It was that farmers' capital which gave the principal development to the industry of Lancashire. I am very glad that the industry of Lancashire has outlived the necessity of such support; but it must not be forgotten that it received that support, any more than it must be forgotten that it received, when necessary, the protection of the Legislature. This brings me to the point of the right hon. Gentleman, who said—and the noble Lord too, inferentially—"If manufactures require no protection, how can the agricultural interest demand it?" As an abstract principle I protest against this reasoning. It is not sound as a mere argument. The business of a statesman is, not to inquire why one interest is protected, and another is not, but whether the protection enjoyed by any particular interest is required. Are the circumstances in which agriculture and manufactures are respectively placed the same? I have heard a great deal said about the peculiar burdens on land. I confess I have never held that a sufficient ground for what is called protection to agriculture; but no one will deny that the manufactures of England have peculiar advantages—at least no hon. Gentleman opposite will deny it, because they are always getting up and telling us of them. They perpetually assure us that they have no fear of competition, because the unrivalled advantages of their soil, from the interstratification of coal and iron, independently of their machinery, alone exempts them from all rivalry. The farmers have no such peculiar advantages; they do not, therefore, meet upon equal ground. To say, therefore, that one interest should not be protected, because another does not require protection, is, in fact, quite illogical. It is not an argument; it is a mere appeal—a sentimental appeal: it does for the hustings and for popular assemblies, but it will not bear the examination of the closet, and is unworthy of this assembly. I am not now asserting that the farmers of England do require protection, for that is too great a subject to enter upon now; but

I will venture hereafter to approach it if opportunity is given to me. I shall then be prepared to meet the arguments that are put forward by Her Majesty's Ministers, and which in reality is the case of their great master. I would address my arguments to the creative minds and manly energies that are really responsible for them. We have heard to-night a great deal about territorial aristocracy. There may be some doubts whether we have a territorial aristocracy in this country; but there is none whatever that we have an aristocracy of wealth. We all feel it, and I believe that the measures of Her Majesty's Ministers have a tendency to increase that power in a degree I believe not beneficial to the people; but suppose there were in England what is called a territorial aristocracy, I utterly protest against the rhetorical position taken up by the right hon. Gentleman, and also touched upon by the noble Lord. The right hon. Gentleman has argued upon the case as if the aristocracy of England were a privileged aristocracy. What privileges have they? I have on more than one occasion risen in this House to uphold the cause of what I call our territorial Constitution, not imagining by such a word I was maintaining the mere interests of peers and esquires. I certainly should not have risen had I thought I was pleading only their cause. But this territorial Constitution which I have defended, has given to this country public liberty and the blessings of local and self-government. It appeals to all; it has immense ramifications; it touches every class of the community. I have talked myself of the necessity of maintaining the preponderance of the agricultural interest, and I remember somebody or other saying, "Can anything be more improper than thus holding up the necessity of the predominance of a class in the country?" I do not imagine for a moment that the agricultural interest is constituted merely of the proprietors of land. The agricultural interest is that great body of people who are the cultivators of the earth; and if you materially change the balance between the populations that depend upon the two great interests of this country, you shake to its centre that territorial constitution, you destroy the security for local government—you subvert the guarantee for public liberty—you change, in fact, the character of England; you bring about that social revolution which the right hon. Gentleman always reminded

us would be the consequence of following the policy of the school of Manchester. Sir, there is nothing exclusive or restrictive in this territorial constitution, or I am sure it would not be tolerated for a moment in England. From the days of Sir Robert Walpole to the present moment, with one solitary exception, all those who have realized large fortunes in our great seats of industry, have deposited the results of their successful enterprise in the soil of their country. The power of acquiring territorial possessions is open to every man. The fact that every family which has acquired great wealth has invested that wealth in the purchase of land, affords the best possible proof that in our territorial constitution there is nothing alien or adverse to the interests of commerce or manufactures. Respecting the county in which I myself lived, I can state from my own experience, within the last twenty years, that not less than one-third of the land of that county has changed hands; and I may add, that even some portion of that land has been purchased by Gentlemen who subscribed to the funds of the Anti-Corn-Law League. Away, then, with this declamation about a territorial aristocracy, as if it were a body distinguished from all other classes. The Constitution of this country has invested the proprietors of land with certain duties and certain rights, which all may acquire, and aspire to fulfil. It has secured to us at all times, and under all circumstances, leaders who have saved us from that despotism which has too often been the fate of other countries. It affords to every man that position to which his property and intelligence entitle him: no man need despair of obtaining the highest place in our free aristocracy—even the sons of the humblest may find a place in this or the other House of Parliament. I have no wish to enter further into this question at present. I reserve myself for the third reading, when the whole policy of the Government will be gone into, at which time possibly the right hon. Gentleman may think my arguments weak, but most certainly I will not shrink from maintaining them. And I would now sit down were it not for one observation of the right hon. Gentleman, which I cannot allow to pass without protest. The right hon. Gentleman has uttered three or four common-places—the prostitutes of political economy, whom Gentlemen on each side in turn embrace, in order to show that you may fight hostile tariffs with free imports.

I can hardly venture to enter upon a subject like this on the present occasion. It is one which ought to be most gravely considered by any Minister, for it is amongst the most difficult problems of political science. If a country submits to the imposition of unequal import duties, does she become tributary to the countries by which such unequal duties are imposed? That is an inquiry worth pursuing. And if in consequence of these hostile tariffs we give more of our labour for the produce of foreign countries, what effect will this interchange have on the distribution of the precious metals which are foreign produce? We shall obtain less of them. If we obtain less of them, money will be scarce and more valuable, and then prices must fall, and fall greatly. I admit that, all circumstances being the same, there is no abstract advantage in high prices. But I am at a loss to discover how very low prices can be long endured in a country with an immense amount of public and of private debt, and a vast sum of fixed money payments. I am not disposed at this moment to argue the whole question of the interchange of produce between nations; I shall be fully prepared to go into it when the proper time arrives; but it is rather too cool for the right hon. Gentleman not only to have changed his opinions, but to treat every thing urged in opposition to his present sentiments as absurd. I remember a gentleman, an authority on matters of political economy, Colonel Torrens, who for some time had a seat in this House, bringing the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell), in a series of very ingenious essays, to account for the doctrines which he held upon the interchange of commodities between nations. That was some years ago, but the subject still engages the attention of philosophical investigators. I read so recently as last evening a very elaborate analysis and a very careful application of the laws which regulate interchange between nations. It is a work recently published, and written by a man who is not now, never has been, and, from the constitution of his mind, never likely to be, a Member of this House. He is a man free from any bias of party feeling; who has given up his time to abstract studies; is known to possess a high order of intellect; and may be considered in the light of an hereditary political economist—I mean Mr. John Mill, the son of the historian. That gentleman has written an essay on the laws which regulate interchange between nations. It certainly was

not intended by the author to have any reference to existing circumstances; and certainly it will at once be admitted that the author has no bias in favour of the doctrines which I have endeavoured on this occasion to support. And what now is the final declaration of Mr. Mill? After investigating the subject with all the power of logical analysis for which he is remarkable, and with all the knowledge of economical science for which he is distinguished, he arrives at the conclusion that hostile tariffs must be met by hostile tariffs—that reciprocity should be the principle upon which an exchange should take place between nations. I think I heard a Gentleman say “No;” now that shows the inconvenience of making a speech when you do not expect to have to make one. I have not the book with me, but I am sure that I have not overstated the argument. No doubt Mr. Mill, for political reasons, makes an exception in favour of food, but that does not affect the general economical argument. Mr. Mill has given it as his opinion that reciprocity should be the principle of commercial exchange. I believe it to be possible for a nation with very extensive commercial relations to carry on trade upon the opposite principle for a certain time; but you can only carry on your system of fighting hostile tariffs with free imports, by requiring more labour for the effort, and thus involving the further depression of wages, and the further degradation of the labourer. I will not, however, detain the House longer now. Whatever our numbers or intelligence may be, I am sure that at least we shall not shrink from fighting the great battle to which we are pledged.

LORD G. BENTINCK moved that the Chairman should report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

The Committee divided—Ayes 85; Noes 181: Majority 96.

List of the AYES.

Adderley, C. B.	Buck, L. W.
Alford, Viset.	Burrell, Sir C. M.
Allix, John P.	Burroughs, H. N.
Bagot, hon. W.	Chandos, Marq. of
Bailey, J. jun.	Clayton, R. R.
Banks, J.	Conolly, Col.
Barrington, Viset.	Deedes, W.
Baskerville, T. B. M.	Disraeli, B.
Bateson, T.	East, J. B.
Bennet, P.	Filmer, Sir E.
Bentinek, Lord H.	Finch, G.
Beresford, Major	Floyer, J.
Blackburne, J. I.	Forbes, W.
Bramston, T. W.	Forester, hon. G. C. W.
Briscoe, M.	Frewen, C. H.
Brooke, Sir A. B.	Fuller, A. E.

Gardner, J. D.	O'Brien, A. S.
Gaskell, J. M.	Ossulston, Lord
Gore, W. O.	Packe, C. W.
Granby, Marq. of	Pakington, J. S.
Hall, Col.	Palmer, R.
Halsey, T. P.	Palmer, G.
Harcourt, G. G.	Plumptre, J. P.
Heneage, E.	Rashleigh, W.
Henley, J. W.	Richards, R.
Hildyard, T. B. T.	Rolleston, Col.
Hill, Lord E.	Scott, hon. F.
Hope, Sir J.	Sibthorp, Col.
Hotham, Lord	Stuart, J.
Hudson, G.	Thompson, Ald.
Hussey, T.	Thornhill, G.
Jolliffe, Sir W. G. H.	Tollemache, J.
Knight, F. W.	Tower, C.
Lawson, A.	Tyrell, Sir J. T.
Lennox, Lord G. H. G.	Verner, Col.
Lowther, hon. Col.	Vyse, R. H. R. H.
Maclean, D.	Waddington, H. S.
Manners, Lord J.	Wodehouse, E.
Miles, P. W. S.	Worcester, Marq. of
Miles, W.	Wyndham, J. H. C.
Morgan, O.	Yorke, hon. E. T.
Mundy, E. M.	
Neeld, J.	TELLERS.
Newdegate, C. N.	Borthwick, P.
	Bentinek, Lord G.

List of the NOES.

Acland, Sir T. D.	Cripps, W.
Acland, T. D.	Curteis, H. B.
A'Court, Capt.	Damer, hon. Col.
Ainsworth, P.	Dennistoun, J.
Aldam, W.	D'Eyncourt, rt. hn. C. T.
Armstrong, Sir A.	Drummond, H. H.
Baillie, H. J.	Duke, Sir J.
Baine, W.	Duncan, Viset.
Barelay, D.	Duncan, G.
Baring, rt. hon. F. T.	Duceannon, Viset.
Baring, rt. hon. W. B.	Duncombe, T.
Beckett, W.	Dundas, F.
Berkeley, hon. C.	Dundas, D.
Bernal, R.	Dundas, hon. J. C.
Blake, M. J.	Eastnor, Viset.
Botfield, B.	Escott, B.
Bouverie, hon. E. P.	Esmonde, Sir T.
Bowes, J.	Etwall, R.
Bowles, Adm.	Evans, W.
Bowring, Dr.	Ewart, W.
Bright, J.	Ferguson, Col.
Brotherton, J.	Ferguson, Sir R. A.
Browne, hon. W.	Fitzroy, hon. H.
Bruce, Lord E.	Fitzwilliam, hon. G.
Buckley, E.	Flower, Sir J.
Buller, C.	Forster, M.
Buller, E.	Gibson, T. M.
Busfield, W.	Godson, R.
Rutler, P. S.	Gordon, hon. Capt.
Cardwell, E.	Gore, M.
Carnegie, hon. Capt.	Gore, hon. R.
Chichester, Lord J. L.	Goalburn, rt. hon. H.
Christie, W. E.	Graham, rt. hon. Sir J.
Clay, Sir W.	Granger, T. C.
Clerk, rt. hon. Sir G.	Grimsditch, T.
Clive, hon. R. H.	Hall, Sir B.
Cobden, R.	Hallyburton, Lord J.
Colebrooke, Sir T. E.	F. G.
Collett, J.	Hamilton, W. J.
Copeland, Ald.	Hamilton, Lord C.
Craig, W. G.	Hammer, Sir J.
Crawford, W. S.	Hastlo, A.

Hawes, B.
 Hay, Sir A. L.
 Hayter, W. G.
 Heathcoat, J.
 Herbert, rt. hon. S.
 Hill, Lord M.
 Hindley, C.
 Hobhouse, rt. hon. Sir J.
 Hogg, J. W.
 Holland, R.
 Hope, G. W.
 Hume, Joseph
 Hutt, W.
 James, Sir W. C.
 Jermyn, Earl
 Jocelyn, Viset.
 Kelly, Sir F.
 Kemble, H.
 Layard, Capt.
 Lemon, Sir C.
 Lindsay, hon. Capt.
 Loch, J.
 McCarthy, A.
 McNeill, D.
 Mahon, Viset.
 Mangles, R. D.
 Marsland, H.
 Martin, J.
 Martin, C. W.
 Masterman, J.
 Meynell, Capt.
 Mitchell, T. A.
 Moffatt, G.
 Morpeth, Viset.
 Morris, D.
 Morison, Gen.
 Napier, Sir C.
 Neville, R.
 Nowry, Viset.
 Norreys, Sir D. J.
 Ogle, S. C. H.
 Oswald, J.
 Parker, John
 Peel, rt. hon. Sir R.
 Peel, J.
 Pennant, hon. Col.
 Phillips, M.
 Philippotts, J.
 Plumridge, Capt.
 Ponsonby, hon. C. F.
 A. C.

Powell, C.
 Protheroe, E.
 Pulsford, R.
 Reid, Col.
 Ricardo, J. L.
 Rich, H.
 Roebuck, J. A.
 Romilly, J.
 Ross, D. R.
 Russell, Lord J.
 Scott, Robert
 Seymour, Lord
 Seymour, Sir H. B.
 Shelburne, Earl of
 Smith, Benj.
 Smith, J. A.
 Smith, rt. hon. R. V.
 Smythe, hon. G.
 Smollett, A.
 Somerset, Lord G.
 Somerville, Sir W. M.
 Stansfield, W. R. C.
 Stanton, W. H.
 Staunton, Sir G. T.
 Stuart, H.
 Strutt, E.
 Sutton, hon. H. M.
 Tancred, H. W.
 Thesiger, Sir F.
 Thornely, T.
 Tomline, G.
 Trench, Sir F. W.
 Tufnell, H.
 Vane, Lord H.
 Villiers, hon. C.
 Villiers, Viset.
 Vivian, hon. Capt.
 Wakley, T.
 Ward, H. G.
 Watson, W. H.
 Wawn, J. T.
 Wellesley, Lord C.
 Williams, W.
 Wood, C.
 Wood, Col. T.
 Worsley, Lord
 Wrightson, W. B.
 Yorke, H. R.

TELLERS.

Young, J.
 Baring, H.

luded to a private understanding come to out of that House, and though he should admit that the House generally was not bound by any such arrangement, still he thought that language held among Gentlemen in privato should be afterwards acted on, unless it were a matter of importance with the hon. Gentlemen below the gangway opposite to pursue a contrary course. He wished to have some understanding on the point, in order that they might know the cause of this sudden interruption in the debate.

COLONEL SIBTHORP said, they knew nothing of understandings on that side of the House; they had a very simple, but he hoped determined course to pursue; and he hoped his noble and hon. Friends near him would not let that course be interrupted by any understandings. He meant secret understandings. They would have nothing of the sort on that side of the House. Hon. Gentlemen opposite, and right hon. Gentlemen on the Treasury benches might have, and he made no doubt had private understandings, but he would have nothing of the sort. But he would subscribe to this understanding—to take that plain course which the world would comprehend. Hon. Gentlemen opposite and right hon. Gentlemen on his side of the House wished to misguide the public; and as an instance of that, he would ask why had not the return for which he had moved on the 8th of April been since laid on the Table? He hoped that some Member of Her Majesty's Government would enlighten him as to the cause of that return not having yet been furnished.

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER observed, that the reason why the returns had not been presented was, the nature of the inquiries they involved, which were of so extensive a nature that the results could not be known at once.

SIR R. PEEL said, he did not see any advantage in prolonging this contest. He had not strength to go through with it, and he did not wish to subject others to it. He should therefore propose that the hon. Gentleman should withdraw his Motion, on the understanding that they should not proceed with the Bill that night. He hoped hon. Members who had Motions standing for to-morrow would allow the Bill precedence.

House resumed. Committee to sit again.

Question put on the first Clause,

Mn. P. BENNET moved to report progress.

The Committee divided:—Ayes 55; Noes 166: Majority 111.

Clause again put.

MR. PACKE said, at that late hour it was impossible to think of going into the clauses. He would therefore move that the Chairman do leave the chair, and report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

MR. C. BULLER begged leave to ask, as this species of delay was persevered in, whether a distinct understanding had not been come to among hon. Gentlemen on both sides of the House, that after the division on going into Committee, no further delay would be attempted? He only al-

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Tuesday, May 5, 1846.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL—COMMITTEE.—SECOND NIGHT.

House in Committee upon the Corn Importation Act.

On the first item, that "upon all Wheat, Barley, Oats;" and on the word "Oats" being read,

LORD G. BENTINCK said: I rise, Sir, to move the omission of the word "oats." Our former discussions have almost entirely turned upon the species of grain with which mainly the people of England are concerned, and they have turned scarcely at all upon that species of grain in which the people of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, are more particularly interested. Sir, when we come to consider that there are 558,000 occupiers of land in Ireland, almost every one of whom is a grower of oats, we cannot but admit how important it is to Ireland that we should not hastily alter the law which protects their grain in the English market. The annual importation of oats into England from Ireland, in the last and in former years, amounted in value to a sum of money little short of two and a half millions sterling. Now, supposing that the free importation of foreign oats would only lower the price to the extent of 10 per cent., it would affect Ireland in a very grievous degree. In the single article of oats alone, it would amount to what we may call a tax upon the profits of Irish agricultural industry of not less than 250,000*l.* a year. And in looking at the price of oats abroad, I find that the price is such in years of abundance, that 10 per cent. is a very small deduction to reckon as a consequence of the importation of foreign grain. I hold in my hand a return of the prices of oats exported from the countries on the Baltic from the year 1817 to the year 1839 inclusive—a period of twenty-three years; and throughout the whole of that time I find that the average price of oats was 11*s.* 7*d.* per quarter. Now, the freight from the Baltic differs in nothing but that it is somewhat less than the freight from the western coast of Ireland. So, upon an average of years, unless the agriculturists of Ireland can afford to compete with foreign oats at a price of 11*s.* 7*d.* per quarter, they must be grievously injured by the competition of foreign oats. But I will not rest upon the prices of one place alone. I will take the price of oats at

Amsterdam, at Hamburg, at Dantzic, and at Riga, from the year 1841 to the last year; and I find that the lowest price—mark, not the average, but the lowest price—of oats, was—

In 1841, at Amsterdam ...	9 <i>s.</i>	0 <i>d.</i>	per qr.
Hamburg ...	8 <i>s.</i>	6 <i>d.</i>	"
Dantzic	12 <i>s.</i>	0 <i>d.</i>	"
Riga	11 <i>s.</i>	0 <i>d.</i>	"

I find that the lowest price of oats was—

In 1842, at Amsterdam ...	12 <i>s.</i>	0 <i>d.</i>	per qr.
Hamburg ...	8 <i>s.</i>	6 <i>d.</i>	"
Dantzic	11 <i>s.</i>	6 <i>d.</i>	"
Riga	10 <i>s.</i>	0 <i>d.</i>	"

I find that the lowest price of oats was—

In 1843, at Amsterdam ...	7 <i>s.</i>	0 <i>d.</i>	per qr.
Hamburg ...	11 <i>s.</i>	9 <i>d.</i>	"
Dantzic	10 <i>s.</i>	6 <i>d.</i>	"
Riga	6 <i>s.</i>	6 <i>d.</i>	"

I find that the price was—

In 1844, at Amsterdam ...	12 <i>s.</i>	9 <i>d.</i>	per qr.
Hamburg ...	10 <i>s.</i>	9 <i>d.</i>	"
Dantzic	12 <i>s.</i>	6 <i>d.</i>	"
Riga	6 <i>s.</i>	6 <i>d.</i>	"

I find that the lowest price of oats was—

In 1845, at Amsterdam ...	11 <i>s.</i>	9 <i>d.</i>	per qr.
Hamburg ...	11 <i>s.</i>	10 <i>d.</i>	"
Dantzic	10 <i>s.</i>	6 <i>d.</i>	"
Riga	10 <i>s.</i>	6 <i>d.</i>	"

I hold also in my hand an account of the price of oats in earlier years, at various parts of Europe. The prices I have already read are derived from corn merchants' circulars; but the list I am now about to read is taken from the Report of the Committee of the House of Lords in 1827. In 1827, the price of oats at Amsterdam was 7*s.* 6*d.* per quarter; at Riga it was 10*s.* 4*d.*; at Koningsberg it was 8*s.* 4*d.* In 1825, the price at Koningsberg was 7*s.*; at Archangel it was 7*s.*; in the Elbe it was 6*s.*; at Dantzic, in 1825, it was 6*s.* 6*d.* In 1824, at Dantzic, it was only 5*s.* 5*d.* per quarter. At Stettin it was 8*s.* 6*d.*; at Rostock, in 1824, it was 7*s.* 6*d.*, and at Copenhagen it was 8*s.* 4*d.* [The noble Lord read the prices at several other places, to the same effect.] I have, therefore given (he continued) twenty parts in Europe in which, in the years 1824, 1825, 1826, and 1827, prices were so low, that if the foreign oats had been admitted duty free to compete with the oats of Ireland, it is clear that if the oats of foreign countries had not driven the Irish oats out of the market, yet at least they must have reduced the price, to the very serious injury of the agriculturists of Ireland. The right hon. Gentleman the First Minister of the Crown has said, "If the distress in Ireland is

such that even you are driven to a suspension of the Corn Laws, what possible good can protection be to the agriculturists or peasantry of Ireland?" But I do not think—I never said—that the suspension of the Corn Laws will confer any benefit upon the Irish people. I never said so; but we were asking if we would consent to the suspension of the Corn Laws; and whatever the right hon. Gentleman may have understood, no one else misunderstood me; for I clearly and distinctly said, "It will do the Irish people no good. The suspension of the Corn Laws will not admit one grain of wheat or of oats into Ireland." But I said, "You have wickedly told the people of Ireland that we who sit on these benches, and hon. Gentlemen opposite, who oppose the Coercion Bill, are depriving the people of Ireland of their food—that we are the cause of their starvation." No! I emphatically said, that in the present state of things—in the present state of prices—with the present prices of Europe, where there has been real scarcity, compared with the present prices of England—the foreigners could not afford to export a single grain—and, therefore, that we would be no parties to that delusion; but as you had mocked the people of Ireland with false expectations, we consented to allay their irritation of feeling by a temporary suspension of the Corn Law, which would give a practical proof to the people of England and of Ireland that no good result would follow—that in this year alone the suspension would be of no effect. But I said, that as the people of Ireland had been excited to expect good would come to them from the suspension, we would not be the party to stand between them and the suspension of the Corn Law for a given period. The right hon. Gentleman has referred to my statement, that there are 558,000 holders of farms in Ireland not exceeding fifteen acres each, who have no capital but their own industry and their own honesty; but the right hon. Gentleman omitted the very important portion of the statement, that they held but fifteen acres. For how could it be possible that a farmer who holds fifteen acres can have much capital? Can he possibly have thrashing and winnowing machines, and the other requisite machinery for the management of a farm? But we must deal with such a state of things as we find. We did not make that state of things, but we find 558,000 occupiers of land in Ireland who hold but fifteen acres; and we are

to say—if we may believe my Lord Essex, with whom the right hon. Gentleman seems very much to sympathize—that they ought never to have been farmers, and consequently that they may at once be sacrificed; that 558,000 farmers, employing three millions and a half of human souls, are to be sacrificed, because they do not possess the required amount of capital. But the right hon. Gentleman omitted to state, that those persons are holders of only fifteen acres. It might, certainly, have been better that there should be no small tenements in Ireland; but, as I have already said, we must deal with things as we find them. I cannot cut up human beings like a log of wood. When we find three millions and a half of human creatures, we must take care that we adopt no measure by which they will be reduced to beggary and wretchedness. But it seems that the principles of political economy go so far as to say, that these three millions and a half of human beings are not properly occupied. There was a time when the right hon. Gentleman scouted such political economy as this. I recollect the time when he approved of the description of the political economist contained in the letter of my noble Friend, the Member for the City, to the electors of Huntingdon. My noble Friend, in that celebrated letter, described them as a body whose doctrine it was to buy in the cheapest market, to substitute the corn of Russia and Poland for our own—as a body of men who cared nothing for the difference between an agricultural and a commercial population, and who disregarded the moral and social happiness of the people—as a body of men who counted for nothing a hardy race of farmers and labourers—as a body of men, with whom wealth was the only object of speculation, and who cared nothing for the claims and pretensions of the unprotected poor. Such was the description to which the right hon. Gentleman once gave his hearty concurrence. I recollect that the right hon. Gentleman was interrupted by the hon. Member for Montrose, and what was his language then? "You sat for the likeness," exclaimed the right hon. Baronet, on that occasion apostrophizing the Member for Middlesex, "you present the faithful resemblance of a harsh, cold-blooded, political economist!"—"of one whose only object and exclusive aim is the development of his own peculiar system—of one who, wedded to his own theory, would rejoice, if through its practical carrying out, the produce of the fertile

foreign soils, half tilled by wretched implements, and still more wretched peasantry, should displace in our own markets the products of our agriculture." Sir, if the Member for Middlesex then "presented the faithful resemblance," then "sat for the portrait" of "a harsh, cold-blooded, political economist," I want to know whether we might not now find a no less striking "resemblance" an equally faithful "portrait" of the same character, in the person of an eminent teacher of political economy, at this moment seated on the Treasury bench? Sir, I remember that on a former occasion the right hon. Baronet said, "What has protection done for the several holders of land in Ireland?" Sir, I rather think the question to be answered is, whether the five or six hundred thousand small farmers of that country are worse off than they were at the time of, or rather till some few years after, the Union, when free trade prevailed? I do not think it is easy to dispute, that Ireland has progressed in prosperity since then. Why, Sir, Ireland previously imported grain, while now she is an exporter of grain to the amount of nearly five millions sterling per annum, and of other agricultural produce, which will be affected by the measures now in agitation, to the extent probably of ten millions per annum, though the amount has been estimated, indeed, at no less than 17,000,000*l.*; but even taking it only at 10,000,000*l.*, what a heavy tax on the people of Ireland would the free-trade policy inflict. But, Sir, to revert to the position of the small holders of land in Ireland. At the time these measures were agitated, that class was fast progressing in prosperity. Mr. Campbell Foster states, that from the secretary of the savings bank at Cork he learnt, that in the past year 200,000*l.* were paid into that bank by persons in the class I speak of, in sums not exceeding 30*l.* Was not that ground for hope that Ireland was progressing? These sums of 30*l.* certainly would not constitute the capital necessary to a system of farming on a greater scale, or, perhaps, even to save the class of people possessing such a small amount of capital from being sacrificed by the right hon. Baronet at the shrine of free trade. Still, this indicated a state of independence much to be rejoiced at, and showed the existence of a race of men who, though they might not, perhaps, "cultivate their land to the best advantage," or know how "to make five quarters grow where three did before," are

yet a class of men whom it would be worse than unwise to sacrifice for the sake of a system. Sir, Mr. Pitt and Mr. Burke both exerted themselves to draw more closely the bonds of union between England and Ireland; and how was it they sought to attain their object? Sir, it was by removing the restrictions of the provision laws, which intercepted trade between the two countries. Mr. Burke sacrificed his seat in Parliament for the sake of this object. And Mr. Pitt, when he addressed the House in support of such a policy, is represented as having spoken with extraordinary power, and to have declared that of all the objects of his political life there was none which ever had engaged—or which ever could engage—his mind more ardently and anxiously than the carrying of such a measure. But, Sir, we are now called upon to abrogate the laws they enacted, and to cast off Ireland, and practically to preclude her from entering our markets. We are called upon to deprive her of the partiality and favour she has hitherto been enjoying in our provision trade; and what matters it, if you virtually deprive her of the power of competing in our market, whether it is by direct prohibition, or by a ruinous rivalry, she is excluded? Mr. Pitt and Mr. Burke, Sir, thought that the way to conciliate Ireland, and to obtain her enduring attachment for this country, was by removing the restrictions upon her trade, and by making it to her advantage to cultivate commercial relations with England. But our measures now, it seems, are to be of such a description that you must drive her agricultural produce out of the market. It may be true you are not about to divorce her; but you are going to admit into the arms of England concubines from every part of the world. Sir, the right hon. Baronet has often repeated that he feels no hesitation or humiliation in confessing his "errors" upon this subject, and acknowledging that he has hitherto been wrong as respects the commercial policy of this country. Sir, I do not wish to say much upon that head—it may not be humiliating in a private gentleman—an individual Member not engaged in the government of the country—it may not be humiliating in such a one to acknowledge that for thirty years of Parliamentary life he has been entirely erroneous in his opinions on a great branch of public policy. But I cannot, Sir, concur with the right hon. Baronet, that it is not humiliating to a great Minister—to one who aspires to be a great

statesman—to be obliged to confess that the whole course of his public career has been one continued series of errors. Why, what advantage is there in having men at the helm of public affairs, if not to direct the national judgment? And if he direct it entirely in a wrong course—surely it is humiliating, and surely it cannot be otherwise than a humiliating avowal, that he has governed the country erroneously for a long series of years. Sir, it is the privilege of girls to change their opinions; but even they cannot do so without risk of damaged reputation. And does the First Minister of the Crown think that he can come down to Parliament, and confess that thirty years of experience have been so cast away upon him, that the rumour of a famine—a mere sudden and temporary emergency—can alter all the opinions which that experience established? Does he think he can make such a confession without “humiliation?” But, Sir, the right hon. Baronet said, he thought that if he had changed his opinion, and had not avowed it, that would indeed have been “dishonest,” “base,” and “inconsistent with his duty to his Sovereign and his country.” Sir, I will not enter into a discussion as to how far that might be so. I leave him to settle that matter with his Colleagues, who have declared that they changed their opinions some year or two ago, but yet never acknowledged the fact until the eve of the present Session. For instance, the noble Lord (Lincoln) the Member for Falkirk, when last addressing the electors of Nottinghamshire, declared that the discussions of 1842 had changed his views as to the Corn Laws, and that, in consequence of this change, he had never addressed the House on the subject. I repeat, Sir, I leave it to the right hon. Baronet to settle with his noble Colleague this difficulty as to the duty of a Minister in so delicate a conjuncture. I do not decide how far it would be “dishonest,” or “base,” or “inconsistent with his duty to his Sovereign,” to continue in the Ministry without acknowledging such a change of opinion. But I presume to state, that the right hon. Baronet did remain a Member of the same Administration after his noble Colleague's change of his views on this subject. Sir, allusion has been made to a former remark of mine, on the fact of a recent import having taken place of oats from Ireland to this country; and I have been asked whether I would have intercepted such an import of food from Ireland? Sir, I retort

by asking whether an export of oats and oatmeal be not, at the same time, under the auspices of the Government, going on from this country for the relief of the Irish people? and whether that export be not at the price of 18*l.* or 19*l.* per ton? and whether the same commodity cannot be purchased in Ireland at from 13*l.* to 16*l.* per ton? If, as I believe the fact to be, oats and oatmeal have been imported from Ireland, recently, by hundreds and thousands of tons, it should seem that our “Finance Minister” has been purchasing probably Irish oats, to send back to Ireland for the food of her people; and that he has been buying oats dear in England to export to Ireland, where the price is much lower. Sir, this is the converse of his own political economy. We thought the principle of that system was, to “buy in the cheapest market, and sell in the dearest.” But the political economy he has recently practised is to buy in the dearest market, and sell in the cheapest. I take the liberty of suggesting that the soundest political economy, on this occasion, would be to purchase the requisite supply of food in Ireland; and thus, by relieving ourselves of the cost of transit, and by buying at the cheapest market, we should at the same time relieve the distressed portions of the country at the lowest cost, and encourage the agriculture of other districts of the country. Sir, we have been taunted with denying that distress existed in Ireland, and yet with suggesting measures for the relief of distress. Sir, we have never denied that partial distress existed in Ireland. We have from the first declared, that there was potato disease, and that in certain limited localities there was distress. But what we have denied, and do deny, is the truth of the statements put forth by the Minister. We deny the existence of any general distress, of any general scarcity, of anything like famine; and if the right hon. Baronet would consult those whose business it is to ascertain the state of the provision market, (as corn factors and corn dealers,) and who send out agents to Ireland to acquire information, he would be informed that there is no dearth of food in Ireland. I have letters here, stating, that only three days ago there were several ships unloading cargoes of grain from Ireland; and I find from authentic information, that since December 29. there have been imported from Ireland to London 117,000 quarters, or 16,000 tons of grain. From Limerick

alone, 4,890 tons; from Cork, 590 tons; and to those places the Government has been actually sending grain for the purpose of feeding the people. So that the old adage of sending coals to Newcastle has been realized by the proceedings of the Government, who, perhaps, for the sake of making a great display of their anxiety to provide for what they call the dearth of food in Ireland, have been buying grain here at a dearer rate than it could be purchased in Ireland. Sir, some doubt was thrown by the right hon. Baronet on the statements I made as to the proportion of the population engaged in agriculture in Ireland. I repeat my statement, which in substance was, that there were 685,000 holders of farms in Ireland, of whom 558,000 were holders of farms under 50 acres. From the Population Returns of 1839, it appears that there were then 564,294 holders of farms in Ireland not employing labourers, and 95,300 holders of farms employing labourers, making together 659,600, which number deducted from 685,300 (the present number) exhibits an increase of 25,690 within the last fifteen years. That, Sir, is no mean evidence that Ireland is progressing, and that, if left alone, as regarded agriculture, applying remedies required for social evils, and giving a generous and liberal Poor Law, such as will meet the wants of the labouring classes, Ireland might be expected to go on progressing in prosperity. But the way to make Ireland prosperous is not to take from her the protection she enjoys in our English markets. Why, Sir, in 1839 or 1840, the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, while opposing some free-trade propositions, said, an 8s. duty would be no protection to the agriculture of Ireland, and that it was impossible to peril that agriculture by even such a duty without entailing on the country most serious dangers. And the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Home Department said, no longer ago than last June, that, including Ireland, two-thirds of the people of this country were engaged in agriculture; and that the result of any measure of free trade in corn would be, at once, to throw from 500,000 to 800,000 of the people into pauperism and destitution. Sir, I want to know how the Ministers, who held such language last year, can justify their present course, adopted, as it is, without any evidence enabling them to introduce any new facts or features into the case? How can they now

vindicate their advocacy of a measure which six months ago they deprecated and denounced as calculated to prejudice the interests and paralyze the prosperity of Ireland? The noble Lord concluded by moving to leave out the word "oats" in the clause before the Committee.

SIR H. W. BARRON observed, that the people of Ireland would neither thank the noble Lord for the proposition he had made, nor for the manner in which he had made it. The people of Ireland asked themselves the question, what had they gained by protection? and that was the question which every friend and benevolent landlord in Ireland ought to ask himself. He must confess that he was at first greatly prejudiced against the measure of Her Majesty's Ministers, and had only given it his support because he put more faith in the judgment of those political friends whom he was accustomed to act with, than in his own, in such matters; but having weighed the subject maturely, he had now to acknowledge himself, from conviction, a warm and strong supporter of the Government measures. He had had extreme prejudices on the subject, for all he possessed depended on land—all his ties, early education, knowledge, and experience were with and for the land; but he had been led to see the necessity of such a measure as that introduced by Her Majesty's Ministers; and his own tenants, some of them holders of 200 and 300 acres of land—men of experience and judgment, and a majority of whom were, like himself, prejudiced at first against the measure—had come round to the same opinion, and to the belief that the Government measure would not injure Ireland on the whole. He believed, at the same time, that it was not unlikely it might create stagnation or a panic, such as that which occurred when the Tariff was introduced. Holders of stock suffered on that occasion from the panic, but now they were obtaining 25 per cent. more for stock than they did before. He remembered also the panic that took place in the butter trade in the south of Ireland, particularly when people believed that the article would be reduced from 25 to 30 per cent., on account of the reduction of the duty to 20s. per cwt.; but what was the fact? Instead of the butter trade being diminished, the exports from Waterford and other places had increased fivefold since that time. He could also state, that so far from land being depreciated by the change, it now

sold in the counties of Waterford, Kilkenny, Cork, &c., at from four to five years' purchase more than it sold for before that change took place. A similar effect followed the reduction of the duty on wool. Great injury was expected to flow from that measure; but he could state it as a fact, that sheep brought from 15 to 18 per cent. more after the alteration than before it. He challenged the noble Lord to answer these facts, to the truth of which he could give his personal testimony. He asked them to look at the misery of the Irish people under the present system, by which 3,500,000 persons had been reduced to a state disgraceful to that House and to the country. He was astonished to hear the noble Lord appeal to the restrictive laws as necessary to the prosperity of the Irish people. He believed, on the contrary, that the repeal of those laws would benefit Ireland, and lead the Irish farmers to pay more attention than hitherto to the right cultivation of the soil. The climate of Ireland was not favourable to the growth of corn; and the farmer, therefore, should not depend on corn for the payment of his rent, but on the rearing of poultry, pigs, and cattle, for which the country and climate were much better adapted. The noble Lord was treading on exceedingly tender ground when he taunted Members with having changed their opinions. Why, the noble Lord himself was once a strong unflinching supporter of the Whig party in that House; and, recollecting his own change, the noble Lord should be the last man to give them lectures on political consistency. Such charges came from him with exceeding bad grace; and people would be apt to ask, was this the immutable and unchangeable and unchanged man, who so long followed the Ministry of Lord Grey, and who now taunted those to whose opinions he was then opposed? He held that it was the highest honour to a man to come frankly down and state his opinions when they underwent a change. The noble Lord denied the great extent of the present calamity in Ireland. Now, he could tell the noble Lord that there had been thirteen meetings of the nobility, gentry, and land proprietors of all classes in Ireland, Whigs, Tories, Roman Catholics, and Protestant clergy, all uniting to endeavour to meet the present emergency, and who had subscribed thousands of pounds towards that object. They had also called upon Government to bring food into the market for the relief of the people.

The noble Lord said Government ought to go into the market and buy food, thus raising the markets on the ordinary purchasers. A more ridiculous notion, with all deference to the noble Lord, he had never heard mooted in that House. To speak of benefiting the Irish people by sending Government Commissioners into the market to buy up provisions for the use of the people, was the most extravagant proposal he had ever listened to. He had thought the natural course for Government to pursue, in order to reduce the markets, was to procure food from other countries as remote as possible, and send it from time to time into the market to keep the price of provisions moderate. This the Government had done to some extent; and he regretted they had not done so to a greater extent, and at an earlier period. He could assure the noble Lord that the famine in Ireland was no mockery, no delusion. He had not the slightest doubt that, were it not for the course pursued by Her Majesty's Government, instead of having oatmeal at 18*l.* a ton in the south of Ireland, it would have been nearly 30*l.* a ton; and he might state that 18*l.* was about one-third more than the usual price. The noble Lord, however, said there was no actual distress, but in a very trifling degree. Now, he could state from his own knowledge and observation as to the state of four counties, on the borders of which he lived, that very nearly one-half of the poor labourers were living on the charity of other labourers and farmers; and that were it not for that charity, so prominent in the Irish character, there would be thousands of the poor dying from starvation. But the farmers and other classes found it their duty, as well as their interest, to give support to the famishing poor in the districts around them. But the present scarcity was greater than any that had previously been known, and the farmer himself was pinched; and he was afraid the farmer could not render the aid to the poor he had been accustomed formerly to render. The landlords in his neighbourhood had not shrunk from their duty on this occasion. The Marquess of Waterford had been one of the first to come forward; and he employed a great number of additional hands in draining. Lord Stuart de Decies, and other landed gentlemen about his neighbourhood, had acted in the same way. With regard to the price of provisions, he could say that about Water-

ford the measure of potatoes called a stone, which usually sold at this season of the year for 3*d.*, was now selling at 7½*d.* or 8*d.*—more than double the price they had been selling for at any period within the last six years. That was the case also in the neighbouring counties. As to the destitution, he could mention a mountain district, seventeen miles long by from four to seven broad, containing a population of from 12,000 to 15,000, in which there were not above 100 families that had the means of subsistence from day to day. Now, in this case, it was quite impossible that the landlord could step in. To maintain the people in that case would require double or triple the landlord's income. Besides, these people were squatters, and had no legal claim on the estate. With respect to the effect of the measures of Government on the condition of the Irish people, it was only that morning that he had read of the arrival at Liverpool of two or three American vessels laden with precisely the kind of food that was wanted in Ireland—namely, maize and Indian flour, and other articles of cheap food. Would that importation have taken place were it not for the knowledge of what was doing in the House of Commons? Did not the noble Lord know that these cargoes must have an important influence on the price of food in Ireland? The noble Lord could not but know it, for everybody must know it. Accordingly, the people of Ireland had on sympathy with the present Corn Law. He could not recollect that more than one public meeting had been called in Ireland to support them; and not more than three petitions in favour of them had been presented from that country. In the conviction that this measure would ultimately tend to improve the condition both of landlords and tenants, and also to ameliorate the relations between them, he should give his most cordial support to the Government on this occasion.

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER did not rise to pursue the debate on the Amendment of the noble Lord; he would only say, with respect to what had fallen from the hon. Baronet who had just sat down, that it was satisfactory to him to hear so strong a confirmation of the opinion entertained by the Government of the real state of Ireland at the present moment; and he thought the hon. Baronet's statement could not but have its influence on those who doubted what the real state of that country was. He wished

merely to say one word respecting the Motion of the noble Lord, to which he should confine himself entirely. He thought the noble Lord could hardly be aware of the effect of leaving out the word "oats" from the clause. The real effect of that Motion would be, that after the 1st of February, 1849, oats, instead of paying a 1*s.* duty, as proposed by the Bill, would be admitted without paying any duty at all. The House would observe, that in lieu of the duties at present payable on all corn, grain, meal, and flour imported into the United Kingdom, the duties set forth in the schedule of the Bill were to be paid up to the 1st of February, 1849; but the Bill went on to provide what the duties should be after that date; viz. 1*s.* upon all wheat, barley, bear, or bigg, oats, rye, peas, and beans, for every quarter. In lieu, however, of that duty the noble Lord proposed nothing; therefore the effect of the Motion would be, that the duty on oats would be lost altogether, and that oats would be admitted without paying any duty. Probably the noble Lord did not contemplate this effect of his Motion; and thinking so, he (the Chancellor of the Exchequer), after consultation with the best authorities, had felt it his duty to state what would be the real effect of the alteration, if carried, in order that the time of the House might not be wasted in a fruitless discussion. Under these circumstances, he thought it better to abstain from entering into the argument upon which the noble Lord founded his Motion.

LORD G. BENTINCK was not quite sure that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was right in his construction of the Bill. The Bill was not a Bill to repeal the Statute of the 5th and 6th Victoria, cap. 14—the present Corn Law, and consequently after the passing of this Bill that Statute would remain in force, with the exception of such parts of it as were specifically repealed by this Bill. In the preamble of the Bill there was nothing that went to state that all the existing duties should be repealed. The preamble merely stated that "from and after the passing of the Act in lieu of the duties now payable upon the entry for home consumption, &c., of corn, grain, meal, and flour, there shall be levied and paid, &c., on all corn, grain, meal, and flour, already or hereafter to be imported, &c., the duties set forth in the schedule of this Act annexed," until the 1st of February, 1849. There was nothing in that to show that the Bill was to repeal

the existing duties; but as the point was a doubtful one, he had asked the opinion of the learned Attorney-General, which he had understood to be in his favour. But perhaps the learned Gentleman would state what was his opinion as to the proper construction of the Bill. He (Lord G. Bentinck) must say he thought that where several articles were enumerated on which the duty was to be altered as in this Bill, an article which was not enumerated must be held not to be affected by the Bill in which such enumeration occurred.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL thought it was rather hard that his noble Friend had brought forward his opinion, because his noble Friend a short time ago had come and sat by him, and said that he (Lord G. Bentinck) had put a construction on the Bill in which some learned Friends of his differed from him, and that he should be glad to find that he was the better lawyer, and his noble Friend then mentioned his construction of the words; but he (the Attorney-General) said that it was a nice question, and that he should not presume to give an opinion upon it. He did not, however, express any doubt, or say anything that could reasonably be brought forward as an opinion on the present occasion. But he must say now, that his right hon. Friend (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) appeared to him to have stated the matter so clearly, that it did not require the opinion of a lawyer to make it more manifest. It was not necessary to have a repealing Act in order to substitute one duty for another; but if there was a subsequent Act, in the affirmative, which was inconsistent with a prior Act, that necessarily repealed the prior Act, so far as it was inconsistent with it. Now, the words of this clause were, "That from and after the passing of this Act, in lieu of the duties now payable upon the entry for home consumption, &c., of corn, grain, meal, and flour, there shall be levied and paid, &c., on all corn, grain, meal, and flour, already or to be imported, &c., the duties set forth in the schedule to this Act annexed," &c.; and that oats were intended to be comprehended within these general terms was perfectly clear, because in the schedule was a distinct head for oats. Therefore it was perfectly clear that oats were included in the general words—"all corn, grain, meal, and flour." Then, as there were certain duties to be substituted on all the articles included in this general description, the duties, namely, that were specified in the schedule, up to the 1st day

of February, 1849, and from and after that day certain other duties in the clause afterwards specified were to be paid, and when they came to the enumeration of such duties the article oats was to be omitted, it would follow that no duty would be payable on oats at all. On the whole, therefore, he was perfectly convinced that there was no difficulty about the matter; but that on his noble Friend striking out of the Bill the word "oats," no duty on oats would be payable.

CAPTAIN LAYARD said, as the noble Lord had turned out the best free trader of all, he should certainly give the noble Lord his support if he went to a division.

MR. J. S. STUART was not quite sure that he understood the position of the present question. He understood that the first clause, which granted that up to the 1st of February, 1849, the duties on corn and grain should be those specified in the schedule, had received the sanction of the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: The question now before the Committee is, that in the fourth line of the first clause, the word "oats" stand part of the Bill.

MR. BORTHWICK apprehended, that if after the words "corn and grain," in the preamble of the Act, the words "excepting oats" had been inserted, the Motion of his noble Friend would have had the effect without question of retaining the existing duty on oats. The question, then, was, whether that portion of the clause which had already passed the Committee had the effect of repealing the duty on oats. If the duty had been repealed by that part of the clause, then the opinion of his noble Friend was right. He should like to hear the opinion of his hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General as to whether this was not the case. Again, the clause provided that instead of the duties now levied on all corn, grain, meal, and flour, certain other duties "hereinafter specified," should be levied; and if from the hereinafter specification they omitted oats, he could not see how it could be argued that oats were free from all duty.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL would not say that the clause, if amended in the way proposed, would expressly relieve oats of all duties; but the words of the clause showed a manifest intention to substitute different duties for the duties at present existing on all corn and grain; and, supposing that no different duties were substituted on oats, the effect would virtually

be to repeal all former duties on that article, although not in express terms repealed.

Amendment withdrawn.

Remainder of the clause agreed to. On the Question that the clause stand part of the Bill,

LORD G. BENTINCK moved that it be omitted.

MR. FINCH conceived that anything which affected the sister country and her prosperity, and the maintenance of the Union between the two countries, was one of the most important subjects that could occupy the attention of the British Senate. It appeared to him that the speech of the hon. Member for Waterford had rather confirmed the arguments of the noble Lord the Member for Lynn, than weakened them. He seemed to think that Ireland's prosperity was involved in doing away with a great portion of the corn agriculture of the country. If he conceived that Her Majesty's Ministers entertained this notion, and were desirous to see Ireland cease to be the granary of the United Kingdom, then he should consider the hon. Member would be a very useful ally to Her Majesty's Government. But it appeared that the view taken of Ireland's prosperity by the hon. Member and Her Majesty's Government singularly differed; for the latter, as well as all true political economists, considered it would be in the highest degree detrimental, not only to this, but also to the sister country, if such a change took place in her corn agriculture as that this country would cease to derive from her those large supplies of corn at present received, and to that extent make us dependent upon foreign countries. If they passed the measure now before the House, they would, to use the words of Mr. Grattan, sever the strongest link of the Union between the two countries. Indeed it would be a strong argument in favour of Repeal. A great deal had been said about the justice of the measure. But he would ask, where would be the justice of depriving 550,000 poor Irish tenants of protection, and involving them in ruin? It was very well for a noble Lord having a princely fortune to say, that persons of small capital ought never to be farmers. Here, however, they had 550,000 tenant-farmers with small capitals; and according to the view of the matter taken by the noble Lord to whom he had alluded, they ought to be swept away. Why, Parliament after Parliament, and Ministry after Ministry, had assured

them, that in order to get a good supply of corn for England, they should have ample protection; and on the strength of that promise they had invested their all in agriculture, and now, without a moment's notice, they were threatened with annihilation. He contended, that if protection was taken away, the farmers, particularly those of Ireland, ought to be relieved from the malt tax, county rates, poor rates, and other taxes, the justice of abolishing which, on a former occasion, the right hon. Baronet had admitted. They were told that the way to meet foreign competition was by agricultural improvement. This showed how little inquiry into the subject had been made by those who made such a statement: to carry out the improvement would not take a less sum than 300,000,000*l.* In the first place it was said there should be a consolidation of the small farms into the larger ones. Then came the draining of land, and then there was a certain expense for manure, and other incidental charges. The expense of tile draining amounted to not less than 4*l.* per acre; and there were in England and Wales 31,000,000 acres of cultivated land; in Scotland, 9,000,000 acres; making a total of 40,000,000 acres. Striking off 10,000,000 acres already drained, left 30,000,000 acres at 4*l.*, which made the total expense 120,000,000*l.* The improvements consequent upon the consolidation of small farms would not cost less than 6000*l.* for every farm of a rental of 1,000*l.* per annum. The total landed rental of the United Kingdom was, he believed, 45,000,000*l.*, so that there would be an expense of 270,000,000*l.*, making in all, 390,000,000*l.*; and he would venture to say, that if the project of the free traders for the improvement of agriculture were carried out, it would not cost a less sum than 300,000,000*l.* He should give his support to the Motion of the noble Lord.

MR. O. GORE said, that the question before the House was one of so much importance to the commercial interest of the country, that he could not allow it to pass without making a few observations. He considered it to be a measure of greater moment than any that had been brought before the Legislature for the forty years he had had a seat in that House; and he looked upon it as the era from which they might date the decline of this great Empire. The effect would be ruinous to Ireland, would tend to the loss of their Colonies, and prove detrimental to their shipping interests. In this country it was considered

good farming to take three crops of oats from newly reclaimed land ; but in Ireland they took no less than ten crops from it. If he could prove that this measure would reduce the price of oats, then he thought he should have shown that it would effectually discourage the reclamation of waste lands. His noble Friend the Member for Lynn had already proved this in an admirable manner—such, indeed, as his proofs generally were ; but he would submit other arguments ; and first, he would quote the testimony of no less a person than the present Colonial Secretary (Mr. Gladstone), who said, in 1842, in the discussion upon the Tariff, that he could procure annually from the Continent 793,000 quarters of oats at 11s. 3d. per quarter. To this 5s. must be added for freightage, which the right hon. Gentleman said would make the price of continental oats in this country at something like 16s. per quarter. Now, let them see what would be done in Ireland. In that country oats were sold by the barrel of 196 lbs. ; so that it would take a barrel and three-quarters to make one quarter. Oats were now selling there at from 13s. to 14s. the barrel ; so that, if they deducted from this price 5 per cent. for kiln-drying, the barrel of Irish oats must, in competition with foreign oats, be sold for one-half of its present price. He could very well understand the Repealers supporting this measure (it would be enough to make him one if he had not English property) ; but he could by no means perceive how Irish Members who were anxious for the connexion of the two countries, could support these commercial innovations. If an Irish Parliament were sitting in College Green, and such a measure was recommended by the English Parliament, it would be indignantly scouted as a grievous attempt to injure their country. The Repealers would say, “ You see what your friends in England do for you.” To say that this measure would benefit Ireland, was nothing short of downright humbug—a gross and palpable delusion. But he would quote a still higher authority than Mr. Gladstone, or than any of the right hon. Gentlemen on the Treasury bench—Mr. Pitt. What did Mr. Pitt say ?—

“ They (meaning the Irish) have no manufactures but one—namely, their agriculture ; and the Irish agriculturists must be protected. Ireland must fall, and be a clog on this country, if her agriculture ceased to receive support.”

There was no statesman of any renown who advocated such a system. The free-

trade doctrines were quite new—they were innovations, of which, God knew, he had seen enough. There was hardly any part of the Constitution that had not been innovated—the Legislature had been remodelled—the Church had been encroached upon ; but, thank God ! the throne, which was filled by the most amiable and exalted of Her sex, was yet saved.

Mr. F. SCOTT said, it was a strange way of furthering the interests of Ireland to advocate a measure which must infallibly reduce the price of her produce. Nothing was more likely to cause distress there than bringing its grain into competition with that of the foreigner, who could grow it at half the cost. It was said that protection had done nothing for Ireland ; but, let it be recollected, that forty years ago Ireland imported corn for her own support. Within the last four years Ireland exported no less than 6,000,000 quarters of oats into this country, and, in the same period, 5,000,000 cwt. of oatmeal. He could very well understand how Repealers would be anxious for the measure ; but he could not conceive how a Minister of the Crown, who had been placed in his high position to preserve the connexion between the two countries, could advocate a measure which tended to the dismemberment of Ireland.—Clause agreed to.

Remaining clauses agreed to.

Report to be received.

The House resumed.

House adjourned at Nine o'clock.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Thursday, May 7, 1846.

THE CORN LAWS—MOTION OF LORD ASHBURTON FOR CERTAIN RETURNS.

LORD ASHBURTON said, that he did not in any way wish to anticipate the important discussion on this subject which would shortly come before their Lordships. They were all aware of what had passed elsewhere. That information they gained from the Votes of the other House. He was now only anxious that when the Corn Bill did come before their Lordships there should be no delay, as far as he was concerned, occasioned by the calling for any Papers which he might consider requisite for the consideration of this most important subject. He did not wish to delay the discussion of the question, and there-

fore he would now move for two or three Papers which he thought their Lordships should have before them, before they proceeded to the discussion of the Government measure. Their Lordships were probably aware, that that measure would have the important consequence of letting out of bond something like a million and a half of quarters of wheat. Now, that quantity was something like four or five times more than ever had been in bond during the last six or seven years. If the measure were passed at all, their Lordships ought to pass it with their eyes open, and with a full knowledge of all the consequences which it was likely to have on the whole of the agricultural population of this country—a subject which, in Parliament, as well as out of Parliament, was now treated with too much levity and indifference. He, with this view, therefore, should wish to have a Return, made up to the latest period, of the quantity of wheat and wheat-flour, of oats, oatmeal, and barley, under bond in the United Kingdom. To this there could be no objection, and it was a return which could be made with great distinctness. Next, he should wish to have a return of the quantity of the same imported since the commencement of the present year, and of the quantities entered for home consumption; and of the rate of duty paid thereon. He would also wish for a return of the amount payable for every 100*l.* of tithe assessed under the Tithe Commutation Act for each year since the passing of that Act down to 1845 inclusive.

LORD BROUGHAM agreed in the necessity of having the important documents moved for by his noble Friend before them. His opinion decidedly was that the letting of that one and a half million of quarters out of bond would produce a fall in the price of the commodity; but he should endeavour at the proper time to satisfy their Lordships that that depression would be only temporary. After the delay which the Corn Bill had already experienced, he trusted that it would now be expedited as much as possible. He hoped also, that the Land Burdens Committee would endeavour to lay their important Report upon the Table of the House as early as possible.

EARL FITZWILLIAM recommended that the statement should extend back to the year 1828, when the last Corn Bill but one was passed. The information might be on the Table in another form;

but it was desirable that the same Paper should contain the whole. The quantity of corn in bond at present was unusually great; but it was to be accounted for by the fact that the present Corn Bill had been virtually announced, and before the country for the last six months; and that being the case, of course no merchant in his senses would hurry to take his corn out of bond.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND said, that there never was more corn upon the farmers' hands than at this moment. If the corn now in bond had been let in to consumption, he believed that the price of corn would have been much lower. The delay, however, in passing the Corn Bill had prevented that great reduction in price; and so far the farmer had been a gainer by it. They talked of that question as if it were settled. He (the Duke of Richmond) did not believe that it was settled, for he could not imagine that so many noble Lords on the Ministerial side of the House had changed their opinions; and he thought that there were still some fixed duty advocates on the opposition, who would not be induced by a party feeling to vote against their consciences.

EARL GREY was of opinion, and he spoke from some practical knowledge of the subject, that the farmers had grievously suffered from the delay in passing the Corn Bill. Noble Lords seemed to think that the home growers were to be perfectly deluged with wheat when they removed the dam and let in the grain now in bond, which during the last six months should have been flowing into the market in a regular current. He did not think that the farmer would suffer in consequence. The farmer had suffered considerably, and in some parts of the country the price of wheat had been lower, in consequence, as he believed, of foreign wheat not having been admitted. It was notorious that a great quantity of the last harvest's wheat was so bad from the wet and other causes, that it was utterly impossible to grind it without old and foreign wheat. He knew that in the north of England that was almost universally the case with the wheat; and he was convinced that in that part of the country, and he believed that throughout the kingdom, it would have been an immense advantage to the farmers if the ports had been opened in November or December last, so that they might have had foreign wheat to mix with their own inferior grain.

LORD BEAUMONT said, he should probably be able to lay the Report of the Land Burthens Committee upon the Table of the House early next week; and he should hope for great and important measures resulting from that Report.

Motion agreed to. Returns ordered.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Friday, May 8, 1846.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL—BILL REPORTED.

The Corn Importation Bill was reported. On the Question that the Amendments made by the Committee be now read a Second Time,

SIR C. BURRELL said, that as he had, by severe indisposition, been prevented from expressing his opinion on the Corn Law Bill in its earlier stages, he trusted the House would bear with him whilst he briefly stated his objections to it, and his reasons for moving that the Report be taken into further consideration that day six months. He opposed the measure, because he believed its adoption would interfere with the profits of labourers of all classes, whether agricultural or manufacturing. It had been said by the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government, during the progress of the debate, that the prices of labour would not be affected by the admission of foreign corn; but long experience and observation as a landholder proved to him that this was erroneous, for whenever the price of wheat and other farm produce was low, the want of fair profit for capital, industry, and skill to the farmer, created a necessity for not only reducing the wages of his labourers, but what was a more serious evil, reducing their number, and this particularly in the winter months. There was an old saying, that "it is wise to let well alone;" and he asked whether the condition of the country had not been prosperous, before this unexpected change in the opinions and conduct of Her Majesty's Ministers with respect to that protection to agriculture which had been deemed necessary by the wisdom of preceding statesmen, from the time of Edward III. up to the present period? He denied that the partial loss of the potato crop in Ireland offered any sound ground for applying as the remedy a general and permanent alteration of the Corn Laws, to meet a

partial and by no means a general evil; and much less was there any justification for the cry of famine, when it was well known that Ireland never had so prosperous a harvest of every description, with the exception of a partial failure of the potatoes in some parts of that country; while in a great proportion good crops of sound potatoes had been grown, as he had been well assured by correspondents and persons well acquainted with the facts. He must say, that if just grounds existed for the fear of a scarcity of food from the partial failure alluded to, the opening of the ports of that country, and the prevention of the export of its provisions, would have been the best and speediest method of averting the evil professed to be apprehended, instead of importing a few ship-loads of maize as a means of relief. But while the alarm of famine was raising the prices, what was passing? Why, immense supplies of oats, of wheat, and of flour, were constantly sent to Liverpool and other English ports, instead of being reserved on the spot—with a saving of the cost of conveyance—for the assistance of the population in Ireland wherever distress for provisions prevailed. If Gentlemen would refer to the low prices of labour in foreign countries from whence supplies of wheat might arise, they could not deny that these labour prices were the results of low farm profits; and he begged the attention of the House while he stated the prices of labour in some of the countries alluded to, from a document in his hand:—In Spain, the labour wages per day were 7d.; in Portugal, 7d. also; in Russia and Poland, 5d.; at Odessa, 4d.; and in Germany and Denmark, 9d. per day. Would any Gentleman venture to deny that if imports of foreign corn drove down the profits of British agriculture, that, *pari passu*, the wages of farm labour must inevitably fall in due proportion? And the same fall which affected the agricultural labourers would as inevitably follow and affect the manufacturing operatives. Why, in the earlier periods of free-trade discussions as to wheat, the free trade and Anti-Corn-Law party stated that they could not compete with the low prices of continental labour; an assertion which, if it had any meaning, implied a desire to reduce the wages of the operative by reducing the profits—the fair profits—of the farmer, by cheapening his produce, and especially bread corn; for no one would venture to entertain so absurd an idea as that the Anti-Corn-Law League

desired to raise the wages of the foreign labourers to the same or nearly the same rates as those paid in this country. He felt that, considering the peculiar burdens on land, such as the land tax, and the taxes on its produce of hops and barley for malting purposes, not forgetting the poor rates, the church rates, the highway rates, and county rates, chiefly, if not wholly, borne by the land; the land and its cultivators had just and equitable claims to protection against foreign untaxed corn; and if grounds for that opinion were wanting, he might quote the former expressed sentiments of the right hon. Baronet and those of the right hon. the Secretary for the Home Department; but, without dwelling thereon, he would turn to the recorded opinions of two deceased and distinguished statesmen, to whose liberal opinions no exception could be taken justly by any party in the House. He alluded to Mr. Canning and Mr. Huskisson. In the speech of the former, in March, 1827, he said—

“As to the mode, amount, or degree of protection, many questions may arise; but to the principle that some protection is due, I have never heard an objection raised.”

In the address of the latter to his constituents at Chichester, he said—

“I admit that if unlimited foreign import, which the war suspended, were now again allowed, bread might be a little, though very little, cheaper than it now is for a year or two; but what would follow? The small farmer would be ruined, improvements would everywhere stand still, inferior lands now producing corn would return to waste; the home trader and shopman would lose the briskness of retail trade, and while their stocks increased their customers would fall away; and farm-servants and all trades depending on agriculture would lose their employment, and the necessary result of want of work would be, that wages would fall even more rapidly than the price of bread. Then comes some interruption to foreign import, coinciding with the decay of agriculture at home, and corn would be suddenly forced up again to a famine price. Such, I conceive, would be the inevitable consequence of again placing ourselves in a state of habitual and increasing dependence on foreign supply. Let the bread we eat be from home-grown corn, and the cheaper the better. It is cheap now, and I rejoice at it; but, to ensure continued cheapness, we must ensure to our own growers that protection against foreign import which has produced these blessings, and by which alone they can be permanently maintained.”

Who, then, could be surprised that, with such great authorities and such examples, his hon. Friends and himself should object to a dangerous theoretical change in the protective principles, applied not to agriculture alone, but to other industrial interests in this country? The Anti-Corn-

Law party had called in question the disposition to improvement in agriculture. For the injustice of such a charge he appealed to the knowledge of every one acquainted with the subject, whether vast sums had not of late years been laid out in under-draining, an improvement to which he could speak practically, as having thorough-drained above 800 acres of land with such benefit, that he now—to speak within compass—had grown an average of eight sacks of wheat an acre, where previously five sacks were considered a good crop. Again, in the article of guano, unknown in this country till within four years, there had been imported as follows:—

Tons.	£
100,000 of African guano, at 8 <i>l.</i> per ton, costing...	800,000
37,000 of Peruvian guano, at 12 <i>l.</i> per ton, costing .	
	444,000

—————
Total 137,000 tons, costing £1,244,000

Creating a great increase of food, and much additional beneficial employment to our shipping. With these undeniable proofs of the increased spirit of agricultural improvement having been recently carried out, the House would not fail to see the injustice of any accusation of supineness against the agriculturists. A great injury was likely to arise to the warehousing interests from the discovery that by matting the sides of the Baltic ships, and loading them with well-dried wheat, so as to sail for British ports before the severe winter frosts put a stop to northern navigation, and reaching England, they discharged not their corn till a favourable moment, having the power of keeping it in good condition for four or five months; a practice which, while evading all warehouse charges, and depriving the people of their usual employment, could not be adopted by our shipowners, having the opportunity of carrying freights generally all the winter, and more especially as the wages and provisioning of their crews were considerably higher than those of the sailors from the Baltic. In conclusion, the hon. Baronet expressed his utter astonishment that any cause should exist to turn the attention of Irish Members from the benefit, approaching to monopoly and peculiar to Ireland, of having all the English and Scotch ports open to their importations of spare agricultural products, an advantage not formerly enjoyed, and from which Ireland had greatly benefited, and the loss of which, by the proposed measure, could not but be soon felt by the Irish farmers

as a most serious deprivation of a peculiar and exclusive advantage. With these opinions, founded on observation and many years' practice as a farmer, he had no hesitation in considering himself entirely justified in acting upon these opinions, and in opposing the proposed measure as being fraught with injury to all descriptions of industrial interests.

COLONEL VERNER would not have considered it necessary to have trespassed on the time of the House for one moment, had it not been that he observed so few Members from Ireland, particularly those representing counties or agricultural districts, take part in the discussion; and he feared from their silence it might be supposed that the gentry and farmers of that country were either indifferent or favourable to the measure now before the House. He did not now rise with the presumptuous idea of considering the measure as it might affect the country at large, and all our complicated interests. He wished merely to express the alarm which it was natural to feel when one contemplates an experiment, such as must make a total change in the financial system of a country burdened with such a debt as ours—a country, which hitherto relied mainly on its agricultural resources for a permanent provision to meet its wants, and which was now to see those resources very possibly rendered insecure and unavailing. But there was a topic of a more limited nature on which he could speak with something like the authority of a witness. The perilous effects of this measure upon the nation at large had been already fully and ably described to the House. He would speak of the effect that would be produced by it in the part of the country where he resided, in his own neighbourhood, and upon his own property, and of this he felt it to be his duty to speak. He complained of the effect this hazardous measure would have upon a class of persons whose case he much feared had not met with the consideration it deserved: he meant the farmers and agricultural labourers in Ireland. It was thought by some that a reduction of rents would set them at ease; but those who made use of such an argument were little acquainted with the condition of landlord and tenant in various parts of Ireland. Occupying tenants had at this moment an interest in their holdings, which they would lose by the withdrawal of agricultural protection—and it was not to be expected that landlords opposed to the measure, and sufferers from

it, should make good their losses. He did not believe there was a tenant holding directly under him—and he believed the same thing prevailed pretty generally throughout the province of Ulster—who could not have obtained, had he been disposed to part with his farm a few months since, a high rate of purchase, not less than ten pounds per acre from his successor. He would ask, who would become the purchaser when that Bill became the law, and who would remunerate the tenant who had, perhaps, expended his little capital in the purchase of the farm himself, and in cultivating and improving his land, upon the faith that protection would not be withdrawn? Most assuredly not the disabled proprietor. These were some of the grounds upon which he strongly objected to the passing of the measure. Its effects on the country, in common with those who had so ably exposed them to the House, he dreaded; but, for himself personally, he was disposed to bear them without complaint. He felt, as every person must feel, what he believed to be a national calamity; and he felt for the effect it must produce upon the fortunes of men who had, until now, a profitable interest in their holdings—who enjoyed some of the comforts and partook of the feelings of the proprietors, and who were enabled to share with their farm labourers some of the comforts they enjoyed themselves. The measure before the House, if it passed into a law, must create a new order of things. It would not merely deprive the great of affluence, but it would abridge the comforts of the poor: it would take away from a substantial yeomanry all feeling of independence; it would place the whole tenantry of Ireland on the comfortless level of the rackrent system; and it would reduce the condition of the agricultural labourer, who must sink as the classes immediately above him descended. If for these reasons alone, he should feel it to be his duty to oppose the measure; but if the right hon. Baronet was disposed to obtain the consent of the farmers, he would recommend his allowing them to dispose of the produce of the land upon the true principle of free trade. Give permission to the farmer to malt his oats and his barley, which would enable him to compete with the manufacturer, and in this way the right hon. Baronet ought, perhaps, to a certain extent, to reconcile them to the Bill. He could not sit down without joining with those hon. Members who had expressed their regret that the measure had not come

from the opposite side of the House—that it had not been brought forward by the noble Lord the Member for London, or indeed by any hon. Member except the right hon. Baronet, because he could not divest himself of the feeling that the right hon. Baronet had betrayed those friends who had stood true to him for so many years. He could not avoid expressing his very great disappointment at the course the right hon. Baronet had taken. He ought, perhaps, to feel it more sensibly than many others, but he would state the reason why. It had been his good fortune in early life to have seen much of the right hon. Baronet. At the time that the right hon. Gentleman filled the office of Chief Secretary for Ireland, he was serving on the staff of the then Lord Lieutenant of that country, the late Duke of Richmond—a nobleman universally beloved and deservedly esteemed—whose kindness to him had made an impression which could never be effaced from his recollection but with his life. It was at that period he had frequent opportunities of meeting with, and hearing the opinions delivered by the right hon. Baronet, and always with increased delight. He had been brought up a soldier: the greater part of his early life had been passed in the service of his country, at home and abroad. He did not pretend to any extensive acquaintance with public matters, and he felt much satisfaction to think that he should find, when he entered Parliament, a person to whom he could, with confidence, look for guidance and direction. In 1832 he obtained a seat in Parliament—two years afterwards the right hon. Baronet made this declaration, that, “he would not accept power on the condition of declaring himself an apostate from the principles upon which he had hitherto acted.” He considered this conclusive. He had often heard the right hon. Baronet express those principles from which he had declared he would never become an apostate, and he at once enlisted under the right hon. Baronet’s banner. For thirteen years he served the right hon. Baronet faithfully; and was it not too much to expect at the end of that period, when the right hon. Baronet had hoisted the standard of the enemy, that he should join him in fighting under it? He could not. As well might the right hon. Baronet expect him to desert the colours he fought under at the battle of Waterloo. The right hon. Baronet had told the House, that it required three years before he could make

up his mind to advocate this measure; and yet the right hon. Baronet called upon his supporters to change their opinions in as many weeks. He admitted that generally every person had a right to change his opinions; but even to this rule there were exceptions, and, in his judgment, the right hon. Baronet was one of these exceptions. The right hon. Baronet was, or had been the leader of a great party for many years, and he thought it was due to that party to be informed by the right hon. Baronet when the change had taken place in his sentiments. In the observations which he had felt it his duty to make, he begged to say, that he was not presuming to pass a censure upon the right hon. Baronet’s conduct. He had no doubt the right hon. Baronet felt that he was fully justified in the course he had taken; but he felt called upon to stand up in his own defence in these times, when so many and so great changes had taken place. He wished to take the opportunity of showing that he had neither abandoned his principles nor forfeited his character for consistency. So much had been said upon the subject of the state of Ireland, with regard to the alleged failure of the potato crop, that he felt himself called upon to say a few words upon that subject, although he had, upon a former occasion, stated to the House what he, from his own knowledge, felt he was justified in stating. He then told the House, that although he had no doubt distress prevailed in many parts, yet that there was in the country abundance of provisions to supply the wants of all; that the potato crop, divested of the diseased portion, was still an average crop; and that there was more grain of every description in the country at that season of the year, the month of March, than had been for several years previous. In confirmation of this assertion, he would ask leave of the House to read an extract from a letter he had received from a gentleman in the county of Armagh a few days after he had made his statement to the House. The letter was to this effect:—

“You are perfectly correct in your statement to the House relative to the large stock of provisions in this country at present; and what may appear rather strange is, that potatoes are now cheaper in this neighbourhood than they have been for the last four months.”

This letter was dated 26th of April. He would now ask the permission of the House to read a portion of a paragraph from a highly respectable and widely cir-

culated provincial paper, the *Newry Telegraph*, which reiterated his words, although the paper was published before the sentiments could be known in Ireland which he had expressed in the House:—

“No doubt there is, to a certain extent, a deficient stock of potatoes: and the price of the esculent is higher than has been the case, of late, at the same period of the year. But we assert that it is a fact which cannot be controverted, that there are at this moment in the pits of the farmers, generally, large quantities of potatoes of excellent quality. We assert further, that, as compensatory for the deficiency of potatoes, there is in the surrounding country a stock of wheat, oats, and barley, more abundant, by far, than the farmers have ever before been known to have on hand at this advanced period of the season. Moreover, we assert, and can prove from indisputable data, that, considering the effect the panic might naturally be expected to have on the markets for all descriptions of food, the present cost of provisions, as compared with the prices this time last year, does not at all warrant the assumption upon which those proceed who cry out that famine is impending. Here are positive facts:—First, as to bread.—In the *Newry Telegraph* of Saturday, the 19th of April, 1845, the market-note for the week shows the average weight of the sixpenny loaf to have then been 3 lbs. 12 oz. The market-note for the week ending Saturday last, the 18th of April, 1846, shows the present average weight of the sixpenny loaf to be 3 lbs. 4 oz. Next, as regards oatmeal.—From the same source we find that in the Newry Mills, this time last year, oatmeal was 12s. 6d. per cwt.; and its present price at the mills is 16s. per cwt. Then, with respect to flour.—We quote, from our file, the market-note for the date already mentioned, April 19, 1845:—‘Prices of flour at Newry Mills—First flour, 15s. 6d.; second, 14s. 6d.; third, 12s. 6d.; fourth, 8s. 6d.’ From our market-note of last Saturday, April 18, 1846, we find that the present selling-price of the same articles of food are as follows:—‘Prices of flour at Newry Mills—First flour, 18s.; second, 16s.; third, 13s. 6d.; fourth, 11s.’”

He would merely observe, that there could not have been any very great distress in Ireland, when flour was only 1s. 6d. higher in price on the 18th of April, 1846, than at the same period in 1845. He would only trouble the House with one quotation more; it was from a letter he had received yesterday from a gentleman in Dublin, and was as follows:—

“The Indian meal is nearly as dear as our own in Dublin. It is bought chiefly as a curiosity to taste what sort of thing it is. . . . One friend of mine, resident in Kerry, informs me, that the price of potatoes have fallen nearly one-third, and that the chief cause of the hitherto high prices in his quarter (Dingle) was, that persons who had them were holding them over for the highest price.”

He had only now to say, that he was happy to be able to produce authority to bear him out in the statement he had made—of the correctness of which he was

fully assured when he made it, as he had never asserted anything before the House that he did not know to be perfectly true.

SIR W. JOLLIFFE would willingly have listened to any Member of the opposite opinions; but the matter under debate was of such importance (perhaps, indeed, the most important of any on which he should ever speak), that he was induced to offer some observations upon it, although there were many present who were much better able than he was to speak on this occasion. It was painful for him to have to reflect on the conduct of Ministers in whom he had once placed confidence. But however he might respect them as individuals, he felt for their conduct in this matter the most decided disapprobation. The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had usurped the leadership of the party hitherto championed by the Member for Stockport; and it was to be wished that the right hon. Baronet in assuming that position had adopted the straightforward tone, and taken up the high ground which had been aimed at by his predecessor in the leadership of the Anti-Corn-Law party. It would have been far more creditable to the right hon. Baronet had he at first declared that opinion which he had recently avowed, that the Corn Law was as unjust as impolitic. It would have been far better had the right hon. Baronet openly avowed that opinion at the outset of his Anti-Corn-Law career, instead of affecting to rely on the potato failure, to which this measure had really never any application; for free trade could not, in all its glory, prevent the distress which now existed. It was deeply to be deplored, therefore, that the right hon. Baronet should have brought forward such a measure on grounds so low, and arguments so inadequate and inappropriate. It was in vain for the right hon. Baronet to make eloquent speeches, delivered with the greatest effect, and in beautiful perorations to call on the agricultural Members voluntarily to sacrifice all the advantages they had enjoyed under the present protective system, and to reap the rich harvest of self-approbation for such an act of “duty,” as he described it to be. But they could see no advantage, still less “duty,” in abandoning what they deemed to be right and just. They believed the Corn Law had emanated from the wisdom of Parliament, and had effected the distribution of food in a manner beneficial to all parties. Nor could they conceive

whence they could expect the satisfaction the right hon. Baronet promised for its repeal. They considered, on the contrary, that the right hon. Baronet was prejudging the case in accordance only with novel notions of his own. The right hon. Baronet, it would seem, had now adopted all the dogmas of free trade; of which the three principal were—1. That it was the only sound political economy to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market; 2. That cheapness and abundance (or cheapness or “abundance”) constitute the real prosperity and happiness of a people; and, 3. That national prosperity was not possible under a system of protection to native produce. Now, as to the first of these principles, it might be well enough if it could only be practically carried out, which it could not possibly be; and the right hon. Baronet himself had not attempted to satisfy the House, that by any probable extension of commercial intercourse such a principle could be carried into operation. As to protection being incompatible with prosperity, he would advert to a passage in a letter of the right hon. Baronet, which appeared on the 10th of February last, in which the right hon. Baronet said (addressing one of his constituents):—

“It is my earnest hope and belief, that the measure I have felt it my duty to propose to Parliament will contribute to the welfare of the country. We certainly have not prospered under a protective system.”

Now, on that very day, the 16th of February last, the right hon. Baronet made a remarkable speech in Parliament, in which he dwelt upon the greatly increased prosperity of the last three years, and had used these remarkable words: “Look at your physical advantages! Look at your acquired advantages! You have ten times the capital and ten times the skill of any other nation in Europe.” How the right hon. Baronet could reconcile that statement with his previous assertion, that “we had not prospered under a protective system,” was as utterly inexplicable as any thing that had occurred in the course of recent events. In reference to the other great dogma of free-trade philosophy—that cheapness and abundance (or cheapness or abundance) were identical with national prosperity—he (Sir W. Jolliffe) denied it to be so sweepingly and generally true; and declared that experience in a great degree disproved it. Without adverting to any more distant authorities on this

point, he would refer to the months of January, in 1846 and 1845. It had so happened, that at the former of those periods the price of corn had been unusually high, while at the latter period it had been rather low. Now, he could state that, in the district which had come under his own observation, there was a marked increase of prosperity in January, 1846, when corn was high, as compared with what had existed in January, 1845, when corn was low. In the latter period the wages were as low as prices; and the farmer paid as little as possible every week to the labourers—the result, of course, being great distress, which, however, had happily passed away. When the price of corn was rising, the farmers could expend more money in the employment of labour. Nothing could more plainly prove this than the state of the union workhouses at the respective periods referred to; and on this account he had moved for some returns on that head, to which the Government had with apparent readiness assented, but which (though a long period had elapsed) had not yet appeared, nor could he conceive any reason for the delay. But he knew that the returns in question would have demonstrated the truth of the arguments he was enforcing. He could give one or two instances, however, without troubling the House by going into a greater detail. In January, 1846, in the union workhouse of Newbury (Berks) there were ninety-six persons less than at the corresponding period of the preceding year, out of a number of only 320. So, in the union workhouse of Reigate (a union of which a right hon. Gentleman on the Treasury bench was chairman) there were eighty paupers less in January, 1846, than in January, 1845, out of no larger a number than 260. The right hon. Baronet had talked of an imaginary line drawn from Inverness to Southampton, as marking out the division between the productive and comparatively unproductive portions of the country, and had assigned the eastern portion to the wheat-growing farmers, who were described of little consequence in a national point of view. Now he belonged to this eastern half of the kingdom so intersected by this imaginary line, and so did those whom he represented, and with whom he was connected; and though they, the wheat-growing farmers, might—albeit that they raised many millions of wheat every year—be deemed an unimportant class of the com-

munity by political economists, they had some merits to which the people of the other (the westerly) portion of the country could not lay claim. These wheat growing farmers gave their labourers 10s. or 12s. a week; while those of Wilts, Dorsetshire, and Devonshire, gave only 7s. or 8s. The right hon. the Secretary at War had read a letter from an exceedingly experienced and scientific Wiltshire farmer, who declared that the price of wheat had never to his knowledge affected the rate of wages, and that, though he had sold wheat as low as 40s., and as high as 78s., he had never made more difference in the amount of the wages he paid, than from 7s. to 8s. While the farmers, whom he derided as too dependent upon their wheat crops, at all events had the satisfaction of reflecting that they were not influenced in their dealings with their labourers by the principle thus acted upon by the Secretary at War's farming friend. The wheat-growing farmers, when they had the money, never grudged their labourers a fair rate of wages; and, when wheat reached a remunerating price, were far from desiring to reduce and were rather ready to increase their employment of labour, well aware that such investment of capital must be ultimately advantageous. He felt as deeply as any Gentleman on the Treasury benches, that the greatest security for the prosperity of the agriculturists was to be sought for in the general welfare of the community. But he would not consent, that for the welfare merely of the manufacturers, the interests of the producer of food should be sacrificed. He sincerely hoped that the anticipations he had formed as to the effects of these measures would not be realized. But he was so convinced that they were wrong, and that they were fraught with the most imminent peril to the best interests of the Empire, that he could not but give them the most determined opposition. He never could—for party, or for any other purposes—give them that sort of semi-support which some Members had (he was sorry to say) given. He could not be content with the easy excuse, that "the country must be governed"—and that some species of assent to these measures was therefore necessary on the part of agricultural or Conservative Members. He called to mind a declaration of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on a recent occasion—"that to support a measure of which he did not approve, would be as unworthy of him as a Gentleman, as discre-

ditable to him as a Minister." He cordially concurred in the sentiment. It was one in accordance with which he felt bound to act, and such was the course he should on this occasion pursue in giving to this measure his most strenuous opposition.

Mr. BANKES concurred entirely in the sentiments of his hon. Friend who had just concluded his observations. But he rose more particularly to express the sincere and warm gratification which he felt in listening to the observations of the hon. and gallant Member who preceded him—the hon. and gallant Member for Armagh (Colonel Verner), who had delivered a speech in reference to the present state of Ireland which he must assume to be in accordance with the truth, inasmuch as the noble Earl the Secretary for Ireland, though sitting in his place, had not offered any contradiction to that speech. They had hitherto, in the discussion on this question, been without the advantage of the presence of one so capable as the noble Earl of giving information, and it might appear that they had been alarmed to an unnecessary degree in consequence of the absence of that noble Earl, and from the circumstance that there had been addressed to the feelings of the House arguments which would not have been offered if one with the information which the noble Earl possessed had been present to refute them. They were now told by the hon. and gallant Member who had so lately visited that country, of which he was so great an ornament, that the distress, though severe in some parts, was far from being general, and that the measures which had been unfortunately adopted by Government, had greatly increased the evil, by creating alarm, and inducing persons who had potatoes to dispose of to keep them out of the market, in the hope of obtaining at some future time a better price. And now, when the real nature of the scarcity was ascertained—when they heard from those capable of giving correct information, that the evil was far below the alarm—that those who had hoarded stores were now bringing them forth, and that prices were falling, the noble Lord the Secretary for Ireland offered not one word in contradiction to the statement. It was now their happiness to be relieved during the remainder of that factious debate from that which had pressed most severely upon their feelings during the previous portions of it—the assertion which had been so frequently hazarded against them—that, by the delay

which they had interposed to the progress of the present measure, they were starving the people of Ireland. And though they had assented, and readily assented, to the proposition made from the other side to give at once that relief, if relief could have been given by the measure proposed, they had been met by sarcasm. But now all difficulty of that nature was at an end, and they must trust in Providence that the fear of famine no longer existed. During the course of these discussions reference had been made to the year the events of which corresponded most nearly to the crisis alluded to. The year 1822 had very properly been referred to on various occasions. But they had always been told by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government that the analogy between these two periods was not nearly so close as was supposed, and that though there were local failures in 1822, there was nothing to be compared to the scarcity of the present year. They had now reached nearly the middle of the month of May, and he held in his hand a statement which had reference to precisely the same period in 1822. It was an account of the state of Ireland on the 10th of May, 1822, delivered in the House of Peers by Earl Darnley. The noble Earl stated on that occasion that he held in his hand a letter from a gentleman in the county of Clare, in which the writer stated—

“That the distress here is beyond all description, and there is nothing but starvation in every corner of the county. What is to be thought of the conduct of the Ministers who told them that in one part of the United Kingdom superabundance was the only complaint, while in another the people were starving.”

Such was the state of Ireland as described by Lord Darnley. A few days after this statement was made, the condition of the poor in Ireland was more calamitous than ever; and the hon. Member for Midhurst said in the House of Commons, in the middle of June, that—

“In the county of Clare there were now 99,639 persons subsisting on charity from hour to hour. In Cork, there were 132,000 individuals who must perish with hunger if they did not receive relief.”

He was far from saying that, because there was great misery and distress in 1822, they ought to be insensible to anything like the distress of the present year. But he must say, it was gratifying to see how the calamity of 1822 was met by the great and generous efforts of the people of this country—300,000*l.* was raised by voluntary

subscription, and transmitted to Ireland. The Speech of His Majesty from the Throne, on the 6th of August of that year, would show that the distress had been pretty general in Ireland, for it could not be supposed that Ministers had made His Majesty say anything inconsistent with the truth. His Majesty, in proroguing Parliament, said—

“The distress which has for some months prevailed in considerable portions of Ireland, arising principally from the failure of that crop upon which the great body of the population depends for subsistence, has deeply affected me. The measures which you have adopted, seconded as they have been by the spontaneous efforts of my people, have most materially contributed to alleviate the pressure of this severe calamity.”

Such was the language of the Sovereign at the close of the Session. To complete the history of that period, he would next read a speech delivered by His Majesty on opening the Session of 1823. It was to this effect:—

“The provision which you made last Session for the relief of considerable districts in Ireland, has been productive of the happiest effects.”

Such was the history of the distress in 1822. He thought he had proved that the distress of that period was not what the right hon. Gentleman would have led them to suppose. And how was that distress met? The Minister of that day did not think it necessary, in order to relieve that distress, to alter the whole commercial and financial policy of the kingdom; nor did he run counter to the opinions of those who had always followed him. It was not by pursuing such a course that the Minister of that day provided for the difficulty, and led to the result referred to in His Majesty's Speech from the Throne. He maintained that the distress of 1822 was considerably greater than that of the present year; and he felt sure, if the Ministers of the present day had appealed in the same way that the Ministers of 1822 had done to the generous feelings and liberality of the people, they would have been perhaps even more successful, and would have obtained a still greater sum for the relief of the distress in Ireland. There was another course which the right hon. Baronet might have pursued, and which had occurred to him, and which they had never heard explained why he had not adopted, viz., of meeting Parliament in November. If they had done so, they might then have passed those measures for the employment of the people of Ireland, which was all that they required, for he believed they had

no desire to live on the generosity of others, if they could procure employment. He had never heard it explained why that course which did occur to the right hon. Baronet was not pursued. He had never heard any reason why that course was abandoned. The right hon. Baronet had told them that he had submitted two proposals to his Cabinet, and that the Cabinet disagreed with him on both. But the Cabinet afterwards rallied round him; and how came it that neither of these two courses was adopted by the reconstructed Cabinet? One of these proposals was the opening of the ports, and the other the calling together of Parliament. They had been told by Irish Members throughout the whole of that debate that employment had been granted to the people too late—that the funds which had been so liberally set apart for the employment of the Irish people had not yet been received by them, and that, consequently, the distress, such as it was, continued to exist. But if the Minister had adopted that course which did occur to him, and had summoned Parliament at an earlier period, employment would have been secured to the people before the pressure of want came upon them. He was not there to deny that there had been want. [The Earl of LINCOLN: Hear!] The noble Lord had found his voice. That was what he wanted. As a Member of that House he had a right to require the noble Lord to tell him what was the real state of Ireland. He was far from venturing to hope that the noble Lord would be able to say that the whole of Ireland was in that state of prosperity in which that part of it was which the hon. and gallant Member for Armagh had referred to; but the noble Lord had not contradicted the statement of the hon. and gallant Member, and the inference was that he acquiesced in it. In the debate the other night the hon. Baronet the Member for Waterford propounded an extraordinary remedy for the distress of his country. The hon. Baronet said that the farmers in Ireland should give up corn-growing and turn their land into pasture, as that was the most profitable mode of cultivation for the landlords. Perhaps that might be the best for the landlords, but their question was what would be best for the people. The hon. Member for Waterford was, no doubt, well read in the history of the Empire, and was aware that that was a subject which at different periods had been most anxiously considered in this country.

For nearly 100 years the Statute Book contained proofs of the anxiety which had been felt by the rulers of this country with regard to that very alteration which the hon. Member seemed to think would be productive of so much benefit to Ireland. A wise, an indisputably wise, king, the first of the Tudors, Henry VII., had directed his attention to this point, and in the Statute Book of the fourth year of his reign he found a statute against putting of land out of tillage, which set forth that great evils had arisen in consequence of laying out in pasture land which had been used in tillage, for where in some towns 200 persons had been occupied by their lawful labour in cultivating the soil, there were now kept but two or three herdsmen. Such would be the result of the change which the hon. Baronet the Member for Waterford recommended; the land which, under tillage, gave employment to 200 persons, would, in future, only employ two herdsmen, one per cent. of the former population. If this were a landlords' question, the hon. Member might be right in advocating such a change; but if it was a question affecting the people, then he would advise the hon. Member to keep his lands in tillage, for by that means would he be able to find employment for the population. The population might, no doubt, be maintained by other means; but such a result was not to be desired, and was that which the wise king to whom he alluded foresaw, and against which he attempted to provide. It would appear, however, that his endeavours to restrain the converting of tillage into pasture had not been entirely successful, for the enactment was renewed in the reign of Edward VI., and again repeatedly in the reign of Elizabeth, until it became necessary to pass the Poor Law of Elizabeth, and the people were fed by bounty and not by their own free labour. Such was the result of the change from tillage to pasture, as proposed by the hon. Baronet the Member for Waterford. He would recommend, therefore, the hon. Baronet to reconsider the question, and he had no doubt that he would perceive that it was not so much a landlords' as a labourers' question. If it should ever be necessary to enforce the Poor Law of Elizabeth in Ireland, it might be in consequence of a state of things similar to that which had existed in England, viz.—want of employment for the labourers. Before they proceeded to any further stage with the Corn Bill, he trusted

the House would receive from a Minister of the Crown an account of the real condition of Ireland, now in the middle of the month of May, and thereby relieve the just anxiety which they felt on this subject. He thought he heard the hon. Member for Salford (Mr. Brotherton) indulge in merriment. He did not know whether there was anything of a laughable character in the expression of the natural anxiety he felt to ascertain the real state of the people of Ireland. The hon. Member would of course have an opportunity, if he wished it, to explain how he felt on this subject; but for his (Mr. Bankes's) part, he expressed the feeling with the utmost sincerity. He did wish to hear from the noble Lord the Secretary for Ireland, what was the true state of that country. The state of the country was not, in his opinion, combined with the question of the Corn Laws; but he wanted to know whether the Government still continued to assert the proposition, that the present Bill would afford any immediate or future relief to Ireland. If the Government had made any former efforts to serve Ireland, they had not succeeded in their attempts. He had only to express, in conclusion, an earnest hope that the House would receive some authentic information on such an important subject.

The EARL OF LINCOLN: Mr. Speaker, I certainly should have been glad to be spared the duty of rising to address the House on this occasion; not that I have any difficulty in responding to the call that has been made upon me by my hon. Friend the Member for Dorsetshire (Mr. Bankes), but because of the fact that I have been labouring under some indisposition for two or three days, and I am afraid I shall not be able to express myself in a manner so satisfactory to the House as I could wish. At the same time, Sir, I feel that it is not possible for me to remain silent, after the sarcastic tone in which my hon. Friend took notice of the circumstance that I had not risen earlier to reply to the statements of the hon. and gallant Member for Armagh (Colonel Verner). I hope, however, that the House will excuse me, if, for the reason I have assigned, I avoid entering into the whole subject of the Corn Laws on the present occasion, and confine myself simply to replying to the speeches of my hon. Friend the Member for Dorsetshire, and the hon. and gallant Member for Armagh, which speeches were, I think, almost exclusively occupied with a denial of the ex-

istence of want among the population of Ireland. Now, with reference to the call made upon me by my hon. Friend who spoke last, I must say I should have thought that on general grounds, if not for the reason I have given, it was not necessary for the Secretary for Ireland, on the first occasion since his appointment that he happened to hear the statements which have been made by the hon. Gentlemen, to have risen to deny them; for I cannot suppose that the hon. Gentlemen could consider that the other Members of Her Majesty's Government are ignorant of the real state of things in Ireland, or that they do not, from time to time, receive accounts from the Government in that country of the real condition of the people; and I did think that it was well known (as is the fact) that I was equally with my Colleagues responsible for the statements which have been made in this House, respecting the distress in Ireland, by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, and the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Home Department. I claim my full share of responsibility for those statements, for it has been my duty since I went to Ireland to correspond every day, from Dublin, with one or other of my right hon. Friends, and to state to them the severe pressure that exists, and the severe pressure that must be expected to exist for some time to come. That has been my duty, and I say, therefore, when my hon. Friend expresses his doubts of the real existence of distress in Ireland, that I can remove all doubts on the subject from his mind, if those doubts are sincerely entertained, and that the statements of the distress of the people of Ireland which have been made in this House by Her Majesty's Government have not been exaggerated. I do not say that no statements of distress which have been made on the other side of the water have been overcharged. Some of the statements made there may have been exaggerated. Alarm in some cases, and in others, I am afraid I must say, interested motives, may have induced persons to put forth statements too highly coloured; but all those representations have been carefully investigated by the Government of Ireland; and in my conscience I believe that no statement made by the Government in this House has partaken of exaggeration. Sir, my hon. Friend the Member for Dorsetshire tauntingly remarked, that my right hon. Friend at the head of Her Majesty's Government

was sitting next but one to the Irish Secretary, from whom he must have learned the truth as to the state of Ireland; and my hon. Friend called on my right hon. Friend to rise and deny, if he could, the statements which had just been made by the hon. and gallant Member for Armagh. Now, my hon. Friend the Member for Dorsetshire is at this moment sitting within four of my hon. Friend the Member for Northamptonshire (Mr. A. Stafford O'Brien), and I call on my hon. Friend the Member for Northamptonshire to rise and contradict my hon. Friend the Member for Dorsetshire as to the statement he has made of their being no unusual distress in Ireland. My hon. Friend the Member for Northamptonshire has lately had an opportunity of seeing with his own eyes the state of the people of Ireland. I do not know it for a fact, but I believe that my hon. Friend visited his estates in Ireland at Easter for the purpose of seeing for himself what really was the state of the country; and I think that he could, if he chose, contradict the statements respecting the distress in Ireland on which my hon. Friend the Member for Dorsetshire relies. As I have said, I do not know for a fact that the object of his visit was such as I have mentioned; it may be surmise; and I may be mistaken: but this I do know, that twenty-four hours after my hon. Friend's arrival in Ireland he wrote to me, at Dublin, a letter so pressing and so urgent, that I can say that in all the applications with respect to the existing distress that I have received from all parts of the country, there had been none so pressing or so urgent as that which I received from my hon. Friend the Member for Northamptonshire. He stated that which he, as a good landlord, was no doubt glad to do, and which I should have been ready to give credit to him for doing if he had not mentioned it, namely, that he was ready to find the means of supplying all the wants of his own tenantry; that not one of them should come on the public purse: but he accompanied that declaration by this statement also, that many of the peasantry around him were in a state of the utmost distress; and that with them it was an affair, not of weeks, nor even of days, but of hours: and he told me further, that if after that warning on his part I hesitated to supply means of obtaining food to the peasantry of that district, where there was no resident landlord, the responsibility must rest on me, and that it would be my

fault if famine, and consequently disturbance, should take place. Sir, I will not relate to the House what I felt it my duty to do on receiving that letter. My hon. Friend the Member for Northamptonshire has already done more than ample justice in speaking in this House, some evenings ago, of the course I took; but I am very confident that my hon. Friend the Member for Northamptonshire will assure my hon. Friend the Member for Dorsetshire of this, at least, that in the counties of Limerick and Clare the distress of the people, so far from having been exaggerated by Her Majesty's Government, is at present most alarming. After all, my hon. Friend the Member for Dorsetshire does not appear to be quite fixed in his opinion about this distress; for at the outset of his speech he almost went the length of denying all existence of distress in Ireland; but he probably felt that so bold an assertion needed qualification, for, when he came to the close of his speech, he said that he was not prepared to deny that there was distress in Ireland, but that he was prepared to deny that it existed in the generality attributed to it by Her Majesty's Government. Now, if by general my hon. Friend means universal, then I tell him and the House that I am not prepared to assert that the distress is universal in Ireland; but that it is general I am prepared to maintain. The hon. and gallant Member for Armagh stated that the price of potatoes in his part of the country is not higher now than at this time of the year is usual, and he denied the existence of distress in that locality. Now, Sir, I am glad to hear of one spot in Ireland in which there is not any distress; but this one fact does not prove that the distress is not general. I am aware that the pressure is not so great in some parts of the north of Ireland as it is in the south-west, and generally in the south portions of the island; and one reason of this, with respect to the north, is, I believe, that the people in those parts of the country are not so generally dependent on the potato for food as in other parts. In the south-west and the south the pressure arising from the disease in the potatoes has been severe; and even in some parts of the north also, to which the disease has extended, the consequent distress has been felt. My hon. Friend must forgive me on this occasion for saying, that he may not be as capable as some other Members of judging of the full extent of this distress, if he compares

the state of his neighbours in Dorsetshire with that of the peasantry in Ireland. Dorsetshire will not afford a fair test by which to decide this question. He will find that there also, I am greatly afraid, some distress does exist, if it be not so great as the distress of the Irish poor. He may, perhaps, deny that too; but an hon. Member of this House has written a letter which has been lately published, and which puts the matter in a clear light. From that letter it is now known that the poor in that district usually live on potatoes; and it is well known also that they are living on 7s. a week, and that they have to pay rent out of that sum. Now, though the condition of the people in Ireland is undoubtedly bad, yet, I am willing to admit it is not so bad in all cases as to form a strong contrast to such a state of things as this, however melancholy it may appear to those who are used to see people living in better circumstances; but still proofs of the severity of the pressure multiply upon me. As an instance, I may mention, that I, this very morning, received a most pressing letter from the island of Valentia, in the county of Kerry; and that letter is quite free from any charge that can be imputed to the writers, of having from interested motives made a demand upon the Government. The writers of it state that they had thought that their potatoes in the island would have lasted the usual time, but that they now find they are completely gone—that both what they wanted for food and for seed are completely destroyed. They state other cases of distress. But what is their demand? Their demand is not for the public money; but their simple appeal is, that the Government should send a supply, by steamer, of Indian meal or oatmeal, which they should sell to the people, at cost price, for ready money. Sir, I say that when the Government of Ireland are daily receiving such accounts as these, we are justified in saying that the distress is great, and that it has not been exaggerated. My hon. Friend the Member for Dorsetshire read some papers to show that distress prevailed in Ireland some years ago, in the month of May, to a great extent; and my hon. Friend said he felt he had reasons to doubt whether the existing distress was so great as the distress was then, because the loss, he said, from the potatoes was not so great this year as it was then. Now, I will not debate that point with my hon. Friend: I will content

myself with referring him to his hon. Friends the Member for Northamptonshire and the hon. and gallant Member for Armagh, to tell him whether it is not a well-known fact that the month of May is the very month in which, in Ireland, there is the greatest demand for labour, and consequently the least demand for assistance on the ground of distress, if distress exists. And when my hon. Friend taunts us with the remark that the evil day of extreme distress is constantly protracted, let me remind him and the House, that, from the first, it was stated by Her Majesty's Government that the people might be expected to be in a great state of distress in the months of March and April; but that June, July, and August would be found to be the months of the severest pressure. The month of May was passed over, but for what reason? Because the month of May is usually the time, in Ireland, at which the cottiers are either occupied in sowing their potatoes, or are employed on farm labour for wages; and any supply of labour that is wanted at all during that month is usually most fairly paid. It is not, therefore, from any diminution of the distress, or that the potatoes are not so much diseased as was expected, that there has been some diminution this month in the demands on the public purse—though I can assure the House that diminution has been little indeed—but simply from the operation of the cause I have stated. Perhaps the House will allow me to quote another case—a case arising in the county of Cavan. I wish to quote that instance, because it belongs to a district approaching the locality spoken of by the hon. and gallant Member for Armagh. If I had been aware that I should have been called upon to address the House this evening, I might probably have been prepared to state cases arising in the immediate locality of the hon. and gallant Member. A nobleman—I will not hesitate to mention his name—Lord Farnham, a nobleman who is deserving of the greatest possible respect and esteem, and who is as incapable of practising exaggeration as any Member of either House of Parliament, has, within these twenty-four, placed a paper in my hands, respecting a grievous case of distress in a district of the county of Cavan, where there is no resident landlord, who would, like him, have been happy to relieve the wants of the people. Now, my hon. Friend the Member for Dorsetshire has stated that the course taken by the Government had caused those who had

potatoes to sell to withhold them from the market, and that the price has been enhanced by the conduct of the Government. [Mr. BANKES: I said, speaking of the Government, that the alarm they created by their measures induced people to withhold their potatoes, and so created a rise in price.] Yes; but at the same time my hon. Friend stated that this alarm was foolishly created by the Government, and that the result has been a rise in the price of potatoes. I therefore concluded that he meant to say—and I think that is the logical deduction—that the enhanced price of the potatoes was the result of the conduct of the Government. Now, really this is a matter of assertion which it is very difficult to controvert, except by an assertion of an opposite character. But let me ask my hon. Friend and the House to call to mind what are the steps which the Government really have taken on this occasion. But, first, let me point out that there is a great difference in the present state of things in Ireland, as compared with what was its condition in 1823 and the preceding year, to which my hon. Friend has referred; for in those years the loss in the potato crop did not arise from disease, but from the fact of the potatoes having been pitted during a wet season. The potatoes, in consequence of that accident, but nevertheless unexpectedly, were found, when the pits were opened, to be entirely gone. On that account no preparation was made by the Government of the day. The loss of the crop was wholly unexpected. That is the reason of the difference between the two occasions of distress, and a reason that amply explains it. But Her Majesty's present Government, previous to the distress being generally known, as soon as they received information leading them to apprehend it, immediately ordered a supply of Indian corn and other provisions to be stored in various places in Ireland. For what purpose? For the purpose, in the first place, of preventing a deficiency of food. Another purpose the Government had in view, was the equally valuable one of producing a reduction of prices by sending these stores into the market when combinations should have taken place, as they foresaw would be the case, and food should have been raised by such means to a famine price, and been rendered difficult of acquirement, even beyond the necessary operation of the loss of the potato crop. On this point I may quote a case which was the first that came under

my cognizance after I went to Dublin. A deputation from Limerick waited on the Lord Lieutenant and myself, consisting of the Dean of the Established Church, the Mayor, Sir D. Roche, and Mr. Monsell, a gentleman whose admirable conduct with respect to the distress cannot be too highly praised. He has acted with a liberality and patriotism that do him the highest honour. These four gentlemen came up as the deputation, and four gentlemen more respectable could not have been selected; they told us that the loss of the potatoes had come upon them in the city of Limerick completely by surprise, and that whilst a fortnight before they had anticipated that their supply would have lasted until the month of May, they now found that it had failed; that the poor of the city were almost in a state of famine; that the works which had been resolved upon could not immediately be begun; and that there was no employment to be had for the people. We told them that the probability was, that parties who had food in their hands might be operating on the markets. Well, the price in Limerick was at that time $7\frac{1}{2}d.$ a stone; but what was the reduction consequent upon the supply of meal sent by the Government, and the sum given by the Government corresponding to the subscription raised by the citizens among themselves—a reduction showing that we were right in our anticipation that combination might be resorted to to carry up prices? Potatoes immediately fell from $7\frac{1}{2}d.$ to $5\frac{1}{2}d.$ a stone; but even after this reduction, I am sure my hon. Friend the Member for Northamptonshire, and every other hon. Member who is connected with Ireland, will state that it is impossible for the poor of Ireland to support themselves and their families on prices such as those. Sir, I had not the remotest intention of addressing the House on this occasion; I certainly did feel that refutations of such statements as those put forth to-night, of the small amount and extent of distress, had been so often made by other Members of the Government equally capable with myself of distinguishing the truth, and that even the means my hon. Friend had in his hands, if he had been willing to apply candour in using them, were so complete, as conveying information of the real state of the poor in Ireland, that I did not come down prepared on this occasion with any documents or evidence to reply to the charge that has been made. I will not trespass further on the House; but I must

conclude by assuring them, in the most categorical way that I can, that the distress in Ireland, though not universal, is general; and that, as regards the statements which have been made by Her Majesty's Government, they will be found to be fully borne out by facts which before long will be patent and conclusive.

MR. FLOYER had one observation to make in answer to the noble Lord. The noble Lord had thought proper in the course of his speech to make some remarks as to the rate of wages in the county of Dorset, and had, he thought, travelled somewhat out of his way in interposing such remarks in his attempt to answer what he (Mr. Floyer) considered the unanswerable arguments of his hon. Friend and Colleague (Mr. G. Bankes). He asked the House whether the natural impression produced by the noble Lord's observation was not that the common if not the general rate of wages in Dorsetshire was only 7s. a week? [The Earl of LINCOLN: I was quoting Mr. Sheridan's letter.] He knew the noble Lord was quoting Mr. Sheridan's letter; but as he understood him, the noble Lord agreed with the statement he quoted, and adopted it as his own. If the noble Lord was not prepared to stand by it, he should not have made it to the House. Now he (Mr. Floyer) did not pretend to that extent of property and knowledge of the county which were perhaps possessed by the hon. Gentleman who was the writer of that letter; but in his neighbourhood near the county town of Dorset, and many other parts of the county, he knew it was at variance with the truth to say that the labourers were receiving only 7s. as their weekly wages. He knew no part of the county in which the rate of wages was so low. He must refer also to another remark of the noble Lord's, by which he seemed to infer that the condition of the Dorsetshire labourer was something similar to that of the Irish peasant, so far as that he was compelled to live upon potatoes as his common food: he could state with perfect confidence that there had scarcely been any period at which the condition of the labourers of Dorsetshire was better than it was now; and if it was true that they were reduced to live wholly upon potatoes, it was impossible their condition could be as flourishing as it was. As a representative of the county of Dorset, he could not refrain from rising in his place in that House to give his unequivocal denial to any statement which had been or might be

thrown out, that the rate of the wages of the agricultural labourers in that county were universally so low as the House might be led to believe from the speech of the noble Earl (Earl Lincoln).

MR. STAFFORD O'BRIEN: The noble Lord having in the course of his speech appealed to me, I have no hesitation in stating that I can confirm what he has said as far as regards the city of Limerick. I believe that, owing to the precarious supply of food, the noble Lord's fears were not exaggerated when he expected an outbreak in that city; I believe that the promptitude with which the noble Lord attended to the wishes and remonstrance of the deputation who waited on him, did prevent an outbreak in the city of Limerick; and I believe it was owing to the wise precautions of Government in providing a store of Indian meal that the prices of potatoes and oats were prevented from rising to an extravagant price. So much for the city of Limerick. With respect to the district of Clare in which I reside, when I got there I found on one side a schooner attacked on the river by bodies of armed men; I found on the other cattle guarded by soldiers; I found on the hills near me a starving, and to some extent, a lawless population; and those who know Ireland best, those who have lived in Ireland for several years past, know not only that Clare is liable to these outbreaks, but that that particular district to which I refer has got an unenviable notoriety for heading and promoting those riots. When I found this state of things, I felt that, as an inhabitant—still more as a magistrate, as a custodian of the public peace—I ought not to lose one hour in laying before the Government of Ireland the state of things in that county; and I am happy to say that, by the strenuous exertions and conduct of my noble Friend, the poor people are now in full employment; there is no fear of an outbreak; and I believe that this tranquillity will remain, whatever may be the difficulties with respect to their food. The only inaccuracy in the statement of my noble Friend is, that he says I did not anticipate the distress in Ireland. I did anticipate the distress; for the very night before I left town I distinctly stated that there was distress; but I was certainly not aware of the extent of the distress. I was not aware that the potatoes had not only failed the poor people, but that there was really no food for the present and no seed for the future, and that no language could be too

strong to describe the state of distress, misery, and starvation existing in that particular neighbourhood. And now, having borne my full testimony to the statements of my noble Friend, I may be permitted to say that I do not conceive them to be in so violent antagonism to the statements of the hon. Member for Dorsetshire as some Members seem to imagine. My hon. Friend, in his speech, read extracts from a letter to Lord Darnley by Sir E. O'Brien in 1822, describing the state of Clare pretty nearly in the terms I have just described it; and here I would beg to say that there was no gentleman connected with the county of Clare who assisted more to render the inhabitants independent of a precarious supply of food than did that gentleman; and I am happy to bear this public testimony to his worth, because I conceive that his memory deserves it. But my hon. Friend the Member for Dorsetshire has shown that whatever may be the state of Clare, it does not necessarily follow that this should be the state of all Ireland. My hon. Friend, in quoting that letter, alluded to the severe distress which at present exists in the county of Clare; but I think he stated in his speech that it was not universal all over Ireland. In the same way I say, that however severe I may have found the distress in my own immediate vicinity—and I only speak of my own vicinity—it may not be so in all parts of the country. At the same time, I do say, and I do not shrink from saying it, that I believe there is very great and severe distress in Ireland; and that we must look, not for a diminution, but for an increase of that distress. I deeply deplore, however—as I have over and over again said—that the right hon. Baronet should, at the commencement of the Session, have made “confusion worse confounded,” by mixing up the question of Irish distress with the Corn Laws. If we do on the one hand, in the heat of party debate, give too favourable views of the state of Ireland, the right hon. Baronet must recollect that his cause, in the opinion of many of his warmest friends, would have been as strong, and would have been made more clear, if he had drawn a distinction between a transitory calamity and the necessity for permanent measures for its relief; nay, that the pressure of a particular case rendered the Legislature less competent to decide fairly and calmly a question of this great extent. But I need not say that I do not rise to enter upon the question on this occasion; but I feel too deep an interest in

the welfare and prosperity of Ireland than to do otherwise than deplore when I see it mixed up with any subject of an exciting and in some measure of an extraneous character, because it may prevent us arriving at a calm conclusion upon it. I may say also, in reference to that country, that however you may repeal the Corn Laws, or however you may, on the other hand, increase protection to agricultural produce, unless the landlords of Ireland exert themselves—unless they are willing to make sacrifices, to merge their party and political feelings, to soften down prejudices, and to obliterate the bitter memory of the past, the result will do no good to Ireland. I repeat that, while I maintain my own opinion as to the propriety of the course which the Government are inviting the House to pursue, still I do not deny—on the contrary I maintain—that this distress and this misery must be met by the exertions of the Irish proprietors themselves.

Mr. LEFROY rose on the present occasion, not so much from a desire to oppose what had fallen from the noble Lord the Chief Secretary for Ireland, as from a feeling that he would not be discharging his duty faithfully, if he did not state a few facts that came within his own observation, showing that, however distress might exist in certain districts in Ireland, that it was by no means so general in that country as they had been led to believe. He did not intend to contradict the statements that had been made by the noble Lord (Lord Lincoln) in reference to the distress that was said to exist in Limerick and the county of Clare. All that he was prepared to do, was to show that, so far as the circumstances of Ireland were concerned, they did not warrant the measures proposed by the right hon. Baronet; and if they were carried, that they would prove most detrimental to the interests of that country; and that the time would come when they would regret their adoption. He was desirous to state that, from inquiries he had made into the condition of the people in those districts in Ireland with which he was more immediately connected, he found that the reports of the existing distress had been much exaggerated. He would first allude to the county of Longford; and with the permission of the House would read the following extract of a letter which he had received from a gentleman in Longford, dated Granard, April 14:—

“For twenty years I have not seen this market better supplied with potatoes, oats, and meal than

it was yesterday—the former 4d. the stone, good and sound, and in such quantities that all were not sold; oats 13s. 6d. the barrel of 14 stone; and meal, of which there was a large supply, sold at 14s. 6d. per cwt. This report would apply to the market yesterday week, and yesterday fortnight; and I have no doubt but that the resources of this part of Longford will be found more than enough for the consumption during the summer, leaving a large surplus which may be, as necessity requires, drafted off to some other part of Ireland. I attended the market of Castlepollard last Wednesday, which is ten miles from Granard, nearer Dublin, I there witnessed also a plentiful market, a very large supply of potatoes particularly, which were sound and good, selling at 4½d. per stone. The people, I am happy to say, in his (I mean my own) locality are generally employed, and have taken the precautions, by means of the loan funds, of laying up provisions for the summer. We have, thank God, little or no fever, and very little sickness of any kind now in the country.”

He might here mention, that he had taken the opportunity which the recess afforded of going through different parts of Ireland to make himself acquainted with the facts; he visited various market towns in Longford, Sligo, and Rosecommon, and from the prices at which potatoes were sold, as well as the supply in those markets, varying from 3½d. to 4d. a stone, good and sound, and in such quantities that all were not sold, he could not believe that distress existed to any considerable extent. He had also written to several extensive land agents in that country, and he would take leave to read letters that he had received from gentlemen of great respectability.

“I have this day,” wrote one correspondent, “purchased twenty tons of meal, at 15l. 10s. a ton, to issue next month, and to be paid back, after the harvest, by weekly payments. At present we have not felt the pressure, though 15s. 6d. per cwt. for meal, and 3s. 3d. per cwt. for potatoes, is a high price; in 1840, I paid 18s. and 20s. for thirty tons of meal. If we have sufficient employment for three months in the summer, I should be in hopes of escaping the anticipated famine. We are better off than many of our neighbours. At present a combination prevails among the labourers for high wages, 4s. 6d. a day; in consequence many remain idle, and the lands not sufficiently tilled.”

These, he considered, were not famine prices, and further proved that the landlords were not so inattentive to the interests of their poor tenantry as had been represented. With respect to the county of Sligo, he could also state, that potatoes were not selling there at a higher rate than what he had just mentioned; and although at the time of the cholera that town had suffered very severely—perhaps more so than any other town in Ireland—some of the medical gentlemen of Sligo had told him (Mr. Lefroy) that he had not now any vio-

lent cases of bowel attacks arising from want of food, or any fever; and the physician who had supplied the statement to the Government as to the existence of disease in that county, could not be considered as competent to do so, as he lived on the borders of the county Mayo, and had no opportunity of judging of the general state of the county. Sir Robert Booth, Mr. Cooper, and Mr. Wynne, gentlemen resident there, had also stated that there was no appearance of famine; and their statements, he said, were deserving of consideration. The hon. Member read another letter he had received from a gentleman in the county of Armagh, who resided in the neighbourhood of the Duke of Manchester's property, to the following effect. It was dated March 27, 1846:—

“In reply to your inquiries on the subject of fever and famine, I beg to offer the following opinion. Never has there been so shameful an exaggeration on any subject within my memory, as that which has been put forward by the advocates for the repeal of the Corn Laws. With regard to fever, we might say, as compared with other years, there is none; and as to famine, there is abundance of food, and the price is moderate. The only pressure is in cases of looms being idle and weavers unemployed, partly caused owing to the unsettled state of affairs between America and the British Government, and partly by the suspense caused by the Corn Law question. I shall now give my reasons for the opinion I put forward:—1. As to fever. Whenever our district has been visited with fever to any extent, I am immediately made acquainted with it through one or other of the following channels:—1st. The parochial clergy frequently apply for aid to such persons as they find in fever and requiring aid. 2nd. The medical attendant, who has the care of the tenancy, and to whom they have access, not unfrequently asks for additional bedding to separate members of the same family to prevent contagion. 3rd. The borrowers at the loan fund are obliged to have my signature to prevent fines in case of accidental illness, and especially fever, and in the latter case I never refuse it. And lastly, the poor in fever come to me for jam, tea, sugar, and bread, which are generally supplied on demand, as a gift to those thus afflicted. Now, what is the fact? There has not been an instance of a clergyman recommending any one to me in fever since the potato panic commenced. The medical attendant has called my attention to but one case of fever within the same period. There are not three cases of fever in families connected with the loan fund; and lastly, I have had only one case of clothing and one of food as necessary to fever patients. We shall now turn to the question of famine. When others were laying in oatmeal, I was advised by experienced merchants to buy none. Those who bought at that time (September and October) at 17s. 6d. per cwt. for oatmeal, can now have abundance at 15s. I lately entered into contracts with persons who sell meal, to supply all I should order at the market price each week. The want is so little felt as yet, that I have not issued orders for above 10 cwt. of meal.

Those who had diseased potatoes were not altogether losers, in proof of which I may mention this fact, that the steward sold this week the pork fed exclusively on bad potatoes in the castle farmyard for nearly 40*l*. The pigs cost 18*l*., so that 22*l*. profit on eleven pigs, or 2*l*. each, was a very good return in four months."

He had been assured also by a physician residing in the same county (Armagh), in the town of Portadown, that the cases of fever had been less in number than at any former period within his recollection. That gentleman said—

"Portadown, March 28, 1846.

"In answering your note of this day, I have to say that, along with all the other dispensary and fever hospital doctors of the kingdom, I was furnished with a number of questions from Dublin Castle respecting fever and apprehended scarcity of food in the neighbourhood; and I am happy to say that my answers did not suit their purpose. The truth is, there has been less illness, and particularly fever, in this part of the country this winter than almost any other I remember; and, of course, I made my answer accordingly, and it is remarkable, that out of 800 cases, they received only 82 answers betokening fever, bowel complaint, &c., and, as you might observe, many of these only in apprehension, which was the way the question was put. Now as to our locality: I can give, after counting up, the number of fever patients in my dispensary-book since the 1st of January, and I find I have had 19 out of 1,400 patients, which I look upon as exceedingly small out of that number of patients, and for the space of three months. The year before last registered somewhat above 800 patients who had fever; but that was an extraordinary year. The year preceding it, and last year, were each about 150; so you can see, take it in either way, the proportion is small. At present I have not three cases in hand; and I am sure there are not ten cases in Drumree parish, which, according to the census, contains 15,000 inhabitants; besides, this is generally the most subject to fever of any country I know. The district about Jandreyee, I would say, is equally free of fever extending on to Scarva, which is the terminus of my visiting, and within two miles of my own residence; so that, judging from all these circumstances, I would say that your parish cannot be much infected. As to all other sickness, our dispensary report does not exceed last year, nor until the last fortnight did it equal last season in number of patients, which has been increased just lately by a feverish cold or influenza, and a diarrhoea which is just now present, and which I cannot justly trace to unwholesome food."

Another correspondent writes—

"I dined in company with five clergymen on Friday last, who have large parishes, and their decided opinion was, that there never was so little fever as this year. Some of them said they had none; others mentioned one or two cases. They all agreed also in saying that as yet there was no distress of any peculiar degree."

Having considered it his duty to make these statements, it was not his intention to deny the existence of distress in certain parts of Ireland, as he considered it did exist in

several places; but he agreed with his hon. Friend the Member for Northamptonshire in opinion, that that distress had in many cases been caused by a combination of persons, who prevented a sufficient supply of food being sent into the markets, which, as a matter of course, tended to raise the prices. He would, however, suggest to Her Majesty's Government, that they ought to take measures for the distribution of the Indian corn and meal, in such a manner as would defeat that combination. [The Earl of LINCOLN: It has been done already.] Some reflections had been thrown upon the resident gentlemen of Ireland, for not having availed themselves of the "special sessions" that had been ordered to be held, for the purpose of affording relief to the distressed people; but he was informed that the reason of their not having done so arose from the fact that the assizes were so near at hand, that had they taken such measures as was expected they would have done, they considered that they would be conferring benefits on local contractors alone, and not on the people who required assistance; and it was to that circumstance their conduct should be ascribed, and not to any indifference regarding the wants of the poor in their respective localities.

Mr. BORTHWICK rose to say a few words before the House decided upon the Motion submitted by his hon. Friend. The right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government had declared his intention of walking in the light of the Constitution. He was not, however, one who asserted that the Corn Laws was a part of the Constitution. The right hon. Baronet had declared those laws to be unjust, which, but a short time since he deemed to be only impolitic; and what the extent of his next conviction might be, was most difficult to tell. He would read to the House a few lines written by one of the most celebrated men of the age in which he lived—he meant Sir Walter Scott—when comparing Louis the Sixteenth of France with Charles the First of England, which appeared to him to be eminently characteristic of the conduct of the right hon. Baronet. The hon. Member read the following extract:—

"Both sovereigns fell under the suspicion of being deceitful and insincere, when perhaps both, but certainly Louis, only changed his course of conduct from a change of his own opinion, or from suffering himself to be over-persuaded and deferring to the sentiments of others. Few monarchs of any country certainly have changed

their counsels and measures so often as Louis XVI., and with this unhappy consequence, that he neither persevered in a firm and severe course of government long enough to inspire respect, nor in a conciliatory and yielding policy for a sufficient time to propitiate regard and inspire confidence. It is with regret we mention this, in a character otherwise so excellent."

He trusted that the right hon. Baronet, who had at one time declared the Corn Laws to be impolitic, and at another unjust, would, ere long, like Louis XVI., his illustrious prototype, return to his original position; and that the consequences of his changes of opinion might not be visited on his country—he would not say upon himself. He did not accuse the right hon. Baronet of acting upon other than sincere conviction; but it must be apparent to any man who viewed the present state of things, and recollected the past, that it was no light matter which had caused so great a difference between him and a large portion of his followers. Those followers of the right hon. Baronet had given repeated and signal proofs of how desirous they were to remain attached to him. For his financial policy they were willing to do him full justice. They sacrificed many minor considerations and many points of detail sooner than separate from the right hon. Baronet: when the question was not mere detail or of slight import, but one involving a great principle upon which the most important interests of this country depended, they were obliged, however reluctantly, to act for themselves, and to stand by those opinions which they believed to be based upon justice and on a sound policy, and to which they had always adhered. They were, he repeated, prepared to follow the right hon. Baronet wherever he led them, but they were not prepared to see him—in the language of Lord Castlereagh—turning his back upon himself; so long as he walked in a straight and open line of policy—so long as he was guided by the light of the Constitution, so long they were prepared to submit to his leadership; but when he deviated from that path, and would no longer be guided by that light—when he turned into the course selected by his opponents, that party would follow him no further. The right hon. Baronet had stated that what he had before thought impolitic, he now believed to be unjust. This he thought rather a strange expression from one so eminent. For let them consider what it really amounted to—that for thirty years he had been unable to discover what justice was; but notwithstanding this

extraordinary blindness, he became suddenly illuminated, so that he was able to discover it in the course of a single debate. Now it might be fairly said, that policy was the birth of circumstances, for what was politic last year might be impolitic this; but justice was eternal and immutable—the same thirty years ago as she was now—the same at the beginning of this debate, as she was at the end or middle of it. He asked the House, was there any man in his sober senses, from one end of England to the other, who would believe that one possessed of the long experience, the acute judgment, the consummate ability, the keen perception of the right hon. Baronet, could not for thirty years, though thoroughly acquainted with the machinery and working of the State, perceive what was just from what was unjust? The best statesmen might err as regarded matters of policy; but he who could mistake injustice for justice, wrong for right, must be surely the reverse of all that they believed the right hon. Baronet to be. M. Guizot, in the French Chamber, used these words:—

"Sir Robert Peel, therefore, proposes to put those branches of national industry which can accept the contest without perishing, to this proof of foreign competition. But do not think on that account that Sir Robert Peel has ceased to be a Conservative in political economy. Do not think that he has abolished, or that he means to abolish, all protecting duties. You can pass in review all the duties established by this new Tariff, as my hon. Friend the Minister of Commerce said yesterday, and you will find that many protecting duties continue to exist in it, and protecting duties of a very efficacious kind. Sir Robert Peel does not mean blindly to give up the market of England to foreign industry. He is not the apostle of unlimited liberty of commerce. He is merely the partisan of foreign competition limited to certain conditions. Gentlemen, that is the true character, the real end of the measures which are at the present moment under discussion on the other side of the channel. What is there in the measures for us to adopt? The first of these measures, namely, the social reform which interests the manufacturing population, I hesitate not to say is not applicable to us."

His noble Friend the Member for Lynn referred to those words to show that foreign countries were not quite so ready to adopt the right hon. Baronet's policy as he seemed to anticipate; and the right hon. Baronet in reply said, and his reply was rather remarkable, that "he never gave a guarantee that at the approach of a new election the French Minister would say that restriction should be removed." Which amounted to this—that M. Guizot held certain opinions, but would not avow

them; that he thought it a better course to secure a majority in the Chamber first, and to betray them after. Surely that was not the conduct of a great statesman, such as they had been assured M. Guizot was. M. Cunin Gridaine, the French Minister of Commerce, speaking on the question of the Treaty of Commerce between France and Belgium, says—

“The economical reforms proposed in the British Parliament cannot fail to have occupied general attention. Those who think that we should not hesitate to imitate the example given us by the English Parliament, advise a premature and dangerous act. England has never pursued any other line of conduct than that of her interest; and she was right. It is in that particular we should imitate her. From the earliest period it has been the aim of England to extend her manufactures, her navy, her commerce, and to obtain in all cases an advantage over her competitors. She did not suffer herself to be carried away by theories; she consulted facts. She studied her position, compared it with that of other countries, and she acted accordingly. . . . I must here remark, however, that England does not in any way modify her colonial system. That is to say, she continues to reserve for herself the manufactures, navigation, and commerce, which ought to administer to the wants of 100,000,000 consumers.”

It was no wonder that foreign countries should hail with pleasure the relaxations proposed by the right hon. Gentleman. But the question was, were they prepared to act in the same spirit of reciprocity? The hon. Gentleman, who was at this portion of his speech but imperfectly heard, then alluded to the following passage of the speech of M. Guizot :—

“What is the position of France? We do not stand in need of any such social reform, for our manufacturing population is much less numerous than our agricultural population, and is, comparatively speaking, better off than the same class in England, nor is it subject to the fluctuations which periodically affect the British markets. Thus we are not called upon to imitate the social reform now passing in England, and there presenting so interesting a spectacle. Neither are we called upon to imitate her commercial reform, and for this reason, that for a series of years we have been proceeding step by step in the path of industrial reforms, and for the further reason, that the home market is more valuable than the foreign.”

M. Guizot expressed his surprise at the immense disparity between the manufacturing and agricultural population of this country, deceived, no doubt, by the Population Returns of 1841; and more false returns had never been laid upon the Table of that House, no, not even by the Board of Trade. In these returns, every blacksmith, every man who fashioned the ploughshare and the horseshoe, who, in fact,

lived by the farmer, was returned as a manufacturer. Every tailor who made clothes for the farmer and his children—every village sempstress—in short, every description of artificer who lived almost solely upon the farmer and his labourers, was returned as a manufacturer. These people were all returned to that House as a portion of the manufacturing population of Great Britain. The speech of the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel), in reply to his noble Friend the Member for Lynn, was a complete failure. To that noble Lord's arguments he did not even attempt a reply. As regarded the Irish famine, of which they had heard so much in the commencement of these debates, he would read an extract from the *Kilkenny Moderator*, copied into the *Morning Post* of this day :—

“Distress, in some few instances deep and dire, no doubt there is, and no doubt it will increase as summer advances; but then it must be taken into consideration that when the seed will have been sown, potatoes must fall in price. There is an abundant stock of sound potatoes in the country, which is merely withheld from the market on the speculation of commanding an increased price hereafter. The following is the return which we have obtained from the Fever Hospital :—

Patients admitted for the quarter ending	
Feb. 1, 1846	329
For the quarter ending May 1, 1846	246
Showing a decrease of disease for	
the quarter ending May 1 of	83
And as compared with last year :—	
Quarter ending May 1, 1845	330
Quarter ending May 1, 1846	246

Decrease as compared with the corresponding quarter last year . . . 84

This statement did not seem to confirm the prediction of Sir R. Peel, who told them, first, that the famine was to take place in March, then in May, and finally in July. There was, in fact, no such thing as famine in Ireland; and great distress there might be in some parts of the country, but that unfortunately was the case almost every year, and was to a great extent traceable to the social relations between landlord and tenant there. There was plenty of potatoes and plenty of corn in Ireland—there was no deficiency whatever of any description of food in Ireland. He would ask the noble Lord who had spoken on that night (the Earl of Lincoln), whether or no there was not abundance of food in Ireland? The fact could not be denied. But even supposing there was a famine there, how would the present measure relieve it? The want of connex-

ion between the evil and the remedy was so much felt, that nobody had attempted to establish it but the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for the Home Department, who said—

"The hon. Member for Liverpool said last night that he could not see that connexion; and the hon. Member for Northamptonshire, following the same track, has also said that he did not see the intimate connexion between the two questions. Will the House, then, allow me to state what was the effect produced on my mind by this inevitable coming scarcity in Ireland? I foresaw, and I am afraid rightly, that it would be indispensably necessary to give to the suffering community in Ireland aid from the public purse of this country to meet this great calamity. Already some advances of the public money have been asked for, and I am afraid that further advances may still be necessary. Then this great question presents itself—Can in fairness any Minister of the Crown propose to the people of Great Britain to take out of the taxes of Great Britain public money, to aid in the sustenance of their fellow countrymen in Ireland, while, artificially, by laws so designed, the price of the food of the people of Great Britain is enhanced? Other persons may be bold enough to make such a proposition; but I confess that no power on earth should have induced me to be responsible for such a proposal. I told my right hon. Friend that, if such a course should be necessary, I strongly advised the suspension of the existing law; and that suspension, I find, is now generally approved of on this side of the House. The humane, the generous feelings of the landlords of England could not tolerate for a moment that distress, such as that likely to visit Ireland, should not be met."

There had been—there would have been—no objection on any side of the House to relieving the wants of the Irish people. The Government would have experienced no difficulty whatever in such a step—they had experienced none. What hon. Members near him complained of was, not that relief had been applied, but that it had not been applied earlier. They further complained that a temporary exigency should be met by a permanent measure—that principles upon which the whole commercial policy of this country was governed should be overturned to meet a pressing but fleeting evil, for which it was altogether unfit. But let them consider the policy of the Government upon another ground. Why should Ireland be made the pretext for introducing this measure at all? If the measure was just, *per se*, it ought to be supported. If the present law was unjust, it ought to be abolished. If the case amounted to one of justice or injustice, as had been stated, there was no need of dragging in the state of Ireland at all. The right hon. Baronet had, speaking of the agriculture of the kingdom, drawn an imaginary line

from Inverness to Southampton, stating that exceedingly little wheat was grown on the west of that line; but such was not the fact. A great deal of wheat was grown west of it, and some of the best wheat in the kingdom, too. But what was to become of those small farmers and their labourers whom, the right hon. Baronet had admitted, this measure would have the effect of destroying? They were accustomed at public dinners to quote the well-known lines of Goldsmith—

"Princes and peers may flourish or may fade,
A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
But a bold peasantry, a country's pride,
When once destroyed can never be supplied."

He regretted to say, that they did not always sufficiently study the interests of the humbler classes of their fellow countrymen; and in this measure it was plain the agricultural population was quite overlooked. He deprecated this measure as interfering with the market for provisions.

"Of all things" said Mr. Burke, "an indiscreet tampering with the trade of provisions is the most dangerous, and it is always worst in the time when men are most disposed to it; that is, in the time of scarcity. Because there is nothing on which the passions of men are so violent, and their judgment so weak, and on which there exists such a multitude of ill-founded prejudices." "The great use of Government is as a restraint; and there is no restraint which it ought to put upon others, and upon itself too, rather than that which is imposed on the jury of speculating under circumstances of irritation. The number of idle tales spread about by the industry of faction, and by the zeal of foolish good intention, and greedily devoured by the malignant credulity of mankind, tends infinitely to aggravate prejudices which in themselves are sufficiently strong." "It is a perilous thing to try experiments on the farmer. The farmer's capital (except in a few persons and in a very few places) is far more feeble than commonly is imagined. The trade is a very poor trade—it is subject to great risks and losses. The capital, such as it is, is turned but once in the year; in some branches it requires three years before the money is paid. I believe never less than three in the turnip and grass-land course, which is the prevalent course on the more or less fertile sandy and gravelly loams, and these compose the soil in the south and south-east of England—the best adapted, and perhaps the only ones that are adapted to the turnip husbandry. It is very rare that the most prosperous farmer, counting the value of his quick and dead stock, the interest of the money he turns, together with his own wages as a bailiff or overseer, ever does make twelve or fifteen per cent. by the year on his capital. I speak of the prosperous. In most of the parts of England which have fallen within my observation, I have rarely known a farmer (who to his own trade has not added some other employment or traffic) that, after a course of the most unremitting parsimony and labour, (such for the greater part is theirs,) and, persevering in his business for a long course of years, died worth

more than paid his debts, leaving his posterity to continue in nearly the same equal conflict between industry and want in which the last predecessor, and a long line of predecessors before him, lived and died."

Now, it was on statements like these, that the right hon. Baronet founded his arguments. He said, if the farmers have succeeded no better than this in their trade, then what has protection done for them? He (Mr. Borthwick) would reply, if manufactures in England have not prospered, notwithstanding all the natural advantages of that country, then what had free trade done for manufactures? These questions answered one another; but he would ask the right hon. Baronet, whether he was prepared to sacrifice at the shrine of the foul idol of free trade, the prospects and hopes of that numerous class, the small farmers of England?—was he prepared to give up the welfare of his country, which for centuries had depended upon them? The right hon. Baronet said, that he wished to lay the foundation of a permanent prosperity in trade. But that was impossible in the very nature of things. The world had stood for six thousand years, yet no man could show a single instance of an empire, great and prosperous, that had flourished on the sole foundation of trade. Trade was, in its essential character, as fluctuating and variable as the winds and the waves that bore her traffic to our shores. Trade had left all countries that were dependent upon her alone for their prosperity in absolute ruin, while those countries which had remained true to those sound principles that were advocated by his hon. Friends around him, had flourished, as this country had continued to flourish. Did they think, if these new views had been adopted three centuries ago, that England would have commanded the world as she did now? He placed these facts in juxtaposition before the right hon. Gentleman, that in the face of the restrictions which they had maintained, the trade of England had risen from nothing to that vast amount at which the world now wondered. Not simultaneously—not contemporaneously; but on account of that very protection which the right hon. Gentleman now asked the House to remove: and, avowing that from the experience of the last six weeks he has come to the conviction that these laws were unjust, he proposed to strike from the foundations of the country all the props and pillars of her past prosperity.

The right hon. Baronet told the noble Lord the Member for Lynn, in his last speech, that he would give the reasons why he continued to persevere with these measures which he had so unhappily brought into the House. But in the whole of that speech, as in the whole of his preceding ones, the right hon. Baronet had contented himself with simple assertions. He seemed, indeed, to be kneeling at the shrine of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton—to be repeating his *credo*. "I believe," he said, "that the farmers of England will not be destroyed; I believe that westward of a certain line injury will not be done; I believe that the noble Lord the Member for Lynn is wrong in his calculations; I believe that his conclusions are erroneous and inaccurate." But, beyond his own belief, the right hon. Baronet gave them no argument whatever. In looking back upon the history of Her Majesty's Administration, he was almost inclined to believe that the noble Lord the Member for London was not too severe when, in his celebrated letter, he said that Her Majesty's Government only sought an excuse for the repeal of the Corn Laws. But when the noble Lord the Member for London compared, as he did in a late speech, the noble Lord the Member for Lynn to Gil Blas or Dr. Sangrado, he (Mr. Borthwick) begged to remind the noble Lord that that comparison applied to him, and not to the protection party, who maintained the old system; who believed that the heart of the patient was still in the same place that it was before; who repudiated the notions of bleeding and hot water. They practised the old system—they were followers of the ancient College of Physicians, who, relying upon the constitution of the patient, believed that if they left nature to her own course the patient would recover, and the country would be prosperous. In 1841, Her Majesty's Government had not stepped into the shoes of Gil Blas. Their innocent youth had not arrived at that period of discipline; they stood upon the ancient system. The right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government was at that time duly called in: he felt the patient's pulse; he pronounced his opinion; his nostrums were taken, and the country prospered. The country then sought no change; but from the mere love of change, the right hon. Gentleman, following the example of right hon. Gentlemen opposite, abandoned his former views

of the country's prosperity, and adopted new ones. He did not know how to describe the situation of the right hon. Gentleman better than with the comparison with which he lashed another and less distinguished changeling—

"Like the vile straw that whirls about the streets,

The wretched waverer sticks to all he meets,
Coached, carted, trod upon, now loose, now fast,
And carried off in some dog's tail at last."

The right hon. Baronet had spoken with some indignation of what he chose to call an alliance between the noble Lord the Member for Lynn and the Member for Limerick. There was no alliance; but it was a singular circumstance, that the men who had made an alliance with the Anti-Corn-Law League should have become the champions for purity of alliance. The right hon. Baronet and the League were like *Helena* and *Hermia* in the play, not indeed yet seated both upon one cushion: that was to come. But like them—

"Both warbling of one song, both in one key;
Both creating one flower, both on one sampler."

"Like a double cherry, seeming parted,
But yet an union in partition."

"Two lovely berries moulded on one stem,
Two seeming bodies but one heart."

He trusted that the noble Lord would succeed in rendering victorious those principles under which this country had grown to its unprecedented greatness, and that the right hon. Baronet would be defeated in his attempt, which, if it succeeded, there would inevitably follow this consequence, that however it might benefit France and foreign countries, it could not fail to involve in destruction the country in which he lived.

MR. HENLEY wished to offer a few observations to the House on this important subject; and as a Member in his position had little chance of obtaining a hearing in a debate on the third reading, he trusted the House would bear with him now for a short time. With regard to the reasons which had induced Her Majesty's Government to depart from the policy which they had formerly pursued, he might remark, that the first argument adduced by the Government had reference to the social position of the country. A great improvement, they said, had taken place in the country within the last four years, and particularly with reference to crime. But he might remark, that the progress of free-trade measures had not been going on for the last four years, but for the last thirty years; and, therefore, if the dimi-

nution of crime was caused by the adoption of free-trade measures, then that diminution ought to have gone on for the last thirty years. Now, he would assert that during the last four years there had been a remarkable decrease of crime. In 1842 there were 31,000 commitments in England; and these commitments had diminished by a fourth part during the next four years. But, had the same result been obtained during the last thirty years? On the contrary, he found that crime had more than doubled in that time. And with regard to the last four years, had no other cause been in operation than the progress of free-trade measures? He would not now allude to the construction of railways, though the importance of spending 20,000,000*l.* in the course of a year for the employment of labour was not to be overlooked. But was there nothing else? To say nothing of the embarrassment and distress which were felt in the commercial districts in 1842, and the numbers who, having emigrated from the agricultural districts thither, had no parochial relief till they got back to their parishes, all of which causes had a strong tendency to increase crime at that period, and were not now in existence, he wondered that the Government took no notice of the strong religious movement which had been going on in the country for the last ten years—a movement which was neither confined to the Church nor to Dissenters, but which comprised one and all in a great effort to do good to their fellow creatures. Was it not likely that the good seed which had been sown during that time was now beginning to bear some fruit? But without alluding to that circumstance, the Government acted on the bare figures; and though they were too clever and ingenious to assert in express terms that this was owing to their commercial measures, yet they led the House and the country to draw that inference, which amounted to the same thing. But he would admit that the real question was whether these measures were good in themselves, and he was quite ready to go into that question. The hon. Members for Wolverhampton and Durham contended, that the effect of these measures would be to cheapen food, and that then there could be no doubt the people would be benefited. The hon. Member for Stockport did not adopt that argument; he said the cheap-food argument was never his; and he believed the hon. Member never used it except on some particular oc-

casions when he found it necessary to get up the steam. The hon. Member's great argument was, that the country would be benefited by an increase of trade. The Government did not exactly adopt either of those arguments. They did not say that corn would be cheaper by their measure; but they said it would be a guarantee against its being dearer. Now, it was a fact that corn was cheaper in this country thirty years ago, before the commercial code was relaxed at all, and also that there was then a greater equality of price than there was now. But had the condition of the people improved? If it were true that the commercial relaxations of the last thirty years had cheapened bread, increased trade, and obtained equality in price, then the condition of the people of this country should be mended. But was it so? To what test must they resort to try this question? He had already alluded to the question of crime, and shown that it did not bear out the conclusions which Government wished them to draw. With regard to wages, it was hardly possible to come to a sound conclusion, there were so many disturbing causes in operation with regard to articles of consumption. The only test he could take was sugar, an article which was in universal use, and the consumption of which ought to have increased, as tea and coffee had to a great extent superseded the use of malt liquors. Now, he found that in 1820 the quantity of sugar entered in this country for home consumption was 2,901,864 cwt.; and in 1840 the quantity was 3,594,000 cwt. Then, what was the state of the case with regard to the increase of population—a test which had at all times been admitted to be a valid proof of the prosperity of the country. In 1821, the population of Great Britain was 14,400,000. In 1831, the population was 16,643,000; and in 1841, the population was 18,840,000. It was clear, therefore, that the increase of the population was going on at a diminished ratio; and if he had taken Ireland into account it would be seen that the diminution was in a still larger ratio. The Prime Minister had told them that the effect of this measure would be to distress farmers without capital or skill. Though he had shrunk from saying what the probable price of wheat would be under his new measure, yet he had told them that men without skill or capital would be distressed; and when he said that, while supporting the measure, it would not be a harsh interpretation to put

upon the expression if he said its meaning was, that they would be nearly ruined. They were told that nearly the whole of the 588,000 farmers of Ireland were men without capital and without skill; and of the 900,000 farmers in England, and the 300,000 in Scotland, it might safely be inferred that about one half were in the same condition; and the measure, it was admitted, would have the effect of nearly ruining them. The next thing he looked at was, at whose recommendation were they asked to pass this measure. Those who recommended it were a motley group—Leaguers, Chartists, Irish repealers, statesmen on that side of the House, statesmen on this side of the House; statesmen who had so much changed their opinions that he doubted whether future ages would not define a statesman to be a man who gave up his opinions. These statesmen on both sides of the House were followed by a number of persons who had from the beginning existed in the world, and whose language was, in the words of the poet—

“ If in Downing-street Old Nick shall revel
England's Prime Minister, God bless the Devil.”

And now, with regard to the motives of this motley group. With the Leaguers it was clear as the sun at noon-day that, whatever might be their desire for the good of their country, yet the desire for their own private good was palpable to all. Even as a commercial investment, the subscription of 250,000*l.* was better fitted to their purpose than a new machine. With regard to the Chartists, they had declared at their great public meetings, that they cared nothing about the Corn Laws, but, like the fraternity who attended fires, they said, “ We have no objection to a little mischief; ” and if it suited their own views, all the better. The repealers have also said that if the landlords could only be made uneasy, that they would obtain repeal. It might be also difficult to say, if a certain noble Lord whose celebrated publication made so much noise in the world, diffused his lucubrations for the sake of bidding for the affections of the League, or for good graces in a higher quarter. The Gentlemen of Downing-street were ready enough to follow a leader, and many were ready to follow them. He had now taken the opportunity of stating to the House that he could not agree to the measure before it. He could not see the end or effect of this measure. When he saw that an experience of thirty years, with provisions gradually becoming cheaper, and wages

becoming lower at the same time, had not produced any great effect, he could not support the present measure. He could not lose his eyes to this fact, that to a fearful competition of human beings with machine labour, was now to be added the unrestricted competition of the whole world. If he had found that for thirty years, with an increasing trade, the deterioration of the people still continued, how could he support a measure the object of which was to increase commerce, but at the further expense of the people. The bad condition of Ireland had been quoted in the debate, and the distressed condition of the people of the manufacturing districts had also been mentioned; and he would ask if the intended Bill would improve them? The agrarian population of the county of Wilts had also been shown to exist in a very impoverished and degraded state. The right hon. the Secretary of War, who he believed resided among the people of Wilts, had told the House that the meeting at Goatsacre was not an exaggeration. The right hon. Gentleman had said he lived among a population who existed he did not know how. But did not circumstances show that the people of England were approaching to a point as degraded and wretched as the population of the sister kingdom? Did not a large proportion of the people of England live upon the potato, and did they not say, if it were not for the potato they should be reduced to a state of starvation? Did not the farmers run here and there for land? and when they got land, did the wages keep up to a proper level? The manufacturers cried to the agricultural labourers, why don't you come to us? But suppose they went, did the change of locality and work act towards the benefit of these persons? The manufacturers gave high wages, they said; but what did those who were employed by the manufacturers do for their wages? Was not the amount of labour excessive? Statistical returns had been furnished to show the duration of life in the manufacturing districts, and also among agriculturists. In the whole of Lancashire—and much of the population of the county was agricultural and the people very strong—the number of deaths annually was one to every thirty-four of the population. In Liverpool it was one in thirty-four; in London it was one in thirty-eight. Now, with respect to the agricultural districts. In Wiltshire he found the deaths only one in forty-nine; in Dorsetshire one in fifty-six; in Surrey the deaths

were one in fifty-two. Look also at the proportion of children who died. In Liverpool it was one in thirty-nine; in Manchester and Salford (manufacturing districts) one in thirty-four. Out of 100,000 children born, 52,198 only attained the age of five years. Surrey, an agricultural county, exhibited a different result. Out of 100,000 children, 79,000 attained that age. Take, also, the tables of the duration of human life, and what did they prove? Just the same result. The duration of life in Liverpool was thirty-six years, London thirty-seven, Surrey forty-five. Refer to the Factory Commission Report, and the condition of the people would be found most abject and most wretched. It was not for so humble a person as he was to give utterance to a prophecy; but he was quite of the opinion of Mr. Gregg, who, in his pamphlet, had given his opinion and prediction, that no good could result from the present measure. "Wages," said Mr. Gregg, "must fall. Without low wages this country could not compete with the foreigner;" and that writer concluded by saying, that—

"Even with low-priced corn and cheaper provisions generally, with low wages also, prices and the remuneration for labour could not be reduced so much as to allow a successful competition with the foreigner."

The Ministry of the country, had, however, introduced a measure to allow competition with foreign produce and foreign manufacture. They had said they had not changed their opinions on compulsion (for the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had once held different opinions upon this subject). But the League existed, and he was of opinion that that body had proved a great compulsion to those at the head of affairs. They appeared to him to possess no moral courage to resist proper enemies. Men find courage to repel the attack of a knife or stick, but to exert moral courage was one of the most difficult of efforts. It had also been said that no sedition had shown its face during their term of office. But if he recollected rightly, something like sedition had existed in Ireland, and which produced the State Trials. He did wish to say a few words upon "honour;" but a great difference of opinion existed amongst men as regarded the application of the term. A Cabinet Minister, and indeed he thought more than one, stated that he had changed his opinion, not for any personal interest, or for personal purposes, but he had given up opinions on honourable,

grounds. But were Cabinet Ministers only concerned in the question? Was not the question one which affected the condition of the labourer, and did not the measure tend greatly to the injury of that class? If a man extricated himself from difficulty, leaving others in the lurch, that could not surely be considered an honourable course. In conclusion, he would say that at every remaining stage of the measure he should think it his duty to oppose its progress.

MR. ROEBUCK said, that if he thought that if a word of his would add to the length of the debate, he would not utter it, but he wished, without loss of time, to trouble the House on one point; he, therefore, would then only venture to say a few words. With all possible respect for the Member for Oxfordshire, he thought that the observations as to personal interest might as well have been omitted; for he (Mr. Roebuck) did not hesitate to say that he did not believe that that vast array of opposition which now so constantly occupied the forms opposite, would do so without some strong personal feeling. If it was a matter of patriotism only, he could not think that Gentlemen would continue so steadfastly on the benches opposite. But let each talk candidly to the other, and it would soon appear that the real principle at work was self-interest. When the hon. Member for Oxfordshire made his imputation, and said it was the case on that (the Opposition) side of the House, he (Mr. Roebuck) retorted the charge; and if the hon. Member chose to throw about imputations, he might be told that the excitement which was manifested every night on the opposite benches arose because Gentlemen were afraid of their rents being lowered. He would give them the full value of this, for it then appeared that this high and influential party wished to enlist the prejudices of the labourers, and to call up the feelings of the population on their side. They now pretended to be the leaders and the protectors of the people. He had in his time seen many parties play this game. They had first endeavoured to enlist the tenant farmers on their side, but they were too wise to listen to them. Now they called upon the poor labourers to stand by them. He wished to know whether, with all their political feeling for the labourers, they were prepared to entrust the lower classes with universal suffrage on this point? They would not do this: do not let them, then, talk of their sympathy for the people, if they would not give the labouring classes

the means of legitimately expressing their opinions. If the labourers decided against him, he should be satisfied. Now they had a great deal of oration on this question, but very little more. The time was to come, but unfortunately the time never had come, when, amongst others, the hon. Member for Shrewsbury (Mr. Disraeli) was about to enlighten the House on all his doctrines of political economy. But the last time the hon. Gentleman enlightened, or endeavoured to enlighten the House, his speech consisted of this sort of proposition—"Now I am of opinion that you are all in the wrong, but this is not the time to prove it." He would leave out of consideration all the garnish that surrounded this proposition of the hon. Member's, because the hon. Member understood perfectly well the temper of the House, and knew that however backward might be his speech—however shallow his reasoning—no matter what fallacies he might put forward—still, if he seasoned it with a little personality, it would be sure to pass. The hon. Member, as a reader, as one engaged in literary pursuits, knew something of the danger of "dipping"—of not studying a book, but merely dipping into it, opening a page and taking a suggestion here and a sentence there, and then appearing very learned by the number of his quotations. The hon. Gentleman in his recent quotations said, that if he had thought of it he would have brought the book with him. Now, the hon. Member did not bring the book, but he brought a selection from it. The hon. Member quoted the work of a friend of his (Mr. Roebuck's), of one for whose opinions he certainly entertained a great respect; so great a respect, in fact, that if on any question (no matter how strong his opinion might be) his friend differed from him, he would consider that circumstance as a sufficient reason for going over, as carefully as he could, those opinions. His friend John Mill had expressed himself in terms which he would by and by quote, on the subject of the laws of interchange of commodities between the nations. The proposition of the hon. Member for Shrewsbury was this: "You cannot grapple with rival tariffs by free trade, and I will show you that you cannot do so on another occasion—I will not show it now, because this is not a proper occasion." One would think, however, that in a debate on the Corn Law, nothing could be more apposite—nothing suited to a discussion of the kind than this very proposition; but the bit of

sarcasm had not been sufficiently liberated—the venom in the teeth had not yet come in sufficient quantity—the time had not arrived for going further on that occasion; and he therefore said, “I will put off this grand display, with the understanding that, on the last debate, and in the last speech to be made on this question, it will more suitably come forward.” That was a very safe arrangement to make, and doubtless the hon. Member will have much of sarcasm prepared for the occasion. The hon. Gentleman the Member for Oxfordshire had complained of inconsistency in the House of Commons, and had reminded him of the quotation formerly made respecting himself by the hon. Member for the University of Oxford, whom he did not see now in his place, “*Quis tulerit Gracchos de seditione querentes?*” But how applicable would not that phrase be on this occasion! The hon. Member for Shrewsbury said that there was something in the speech of the hon. Gentleman that he had heard before—that it was ringing in his ears—and so it was. It came from the very party with which the hon. Member had been himself engaged as a party man. It came from that (the Opposition) side of the House; and the hon. Gentleman, like many other celebrated actors, had changed his part. He had begun life as a tragedian; but he had since then left off tragedy, and he now found it much more successful to devote his talents to genteel comedy. The hon. Member now forgot his former attachment to the hon. Member (Mr. Hume). The hon. Member forgot that he had been about to follow at one time in the footsteps of the hon. Member for Montrose, and that he had adopted the recommendations of the hon. and learned Member for Cork (Mr. O’Connell). The hon. Member forgot that he had been in the habit of going to meetings at Marylebone spouting radicalism; but if he remembered these things he must recollect that he had heard the sentiments which now seemed to astonish him in their camp, and while these sentiments came back as well-known principles to him, he should recollect that others might have as good a memory as his own. The hon. Member for Oxfordshire said that a statesman is he who is constantly changing his opinions. He should have thought that no Minister could have made up his opinions on coming into office, and have fastened them, as it were, into a faggot, to be thrown aside, or treated as if they

were capable of no further improvement. He should, at least, have thought that, at this time of the world, a man should not be twitted about his change of opinion, while another man was found who took up a particular set of opinions, at a time when his own personal interests were concerned, and when he thought he might get something from a party by joining them, and afterwards, on failing by one set of opinions to gain any regard for himself, picks up another, and plays an opposite character from the same motive. For a man to complain of that sort of change was what he could understand; but that change was, he thought, not like a statesman, but like something else. But if it could be shown, and shown clearly, that there could be no cause for a statesman changing his opinion, save a great feeling for the public good—if it could be shown that in that change all personal predilection were put aside, that party relations, and personal attachments, and old friendships, were all at once endangered for the sake solely of the public welfare, then he would say that that change, however painful it might be, deserved the gratitude of the State, and not its condemnation; and that it could with perfect impunity defy the impotent insolence that chanced to assail it. He would now proceed to show the grounds which really existed for the hon. Gentleman’s quotation of the opinion of Mr. Mill. In the book to which the hon. Member had alluded, the following passage was contained in the preface. It was in reference to some expression that Mr. Ricardo had used, and which might induce the opinion that the whole benefit arising from free trade would operate to the advantage of the country where produce was admitted. But when, from the combined labour of two countries, they got a greater return of produce than from the labour of both separated, the question arose how they were to divide the advantage of this increased produce between the two countries most advantageously; and, in considering this point, it was clear the question of loss did not come into consideration at all. The consideration was, which of the two countries was to have all the gain? And on this subject how did Mr. Mill write in his very preface? He said—

“The opinions now laid before the reader are presented as corollaries necessarily following from the principles upon which free trade itself rests. The writer has also been careful to point out that, from these opinions, no justification can be derived for any protecting duty, or other preference

given to domestic over foreign industry. But in regard to those duties on foreign commodities which do not operate as protection, but are maintained solely for revenue, and which do not touch either the necessities of life or the materials and instruments of production, it is his opinion that any relaxation of such duties beyond what may be required by the interests of the revenue itself, should, in general, be made contingent upon the adoption of some corresponding degree of freedom of trade with this country by the nation from which the commodities are imported."

The House would thus see that Mr. Mill excludes, in the first place, all protective duties whatever. Then he excludes the necessities of life, which of course included corn and the materials and instruments of production. Now, he wanted to know how the opinions of Mr. John Mill could bear on the case, or how they were to be enlisted in a debate in favour of the Corn Laws: considering that these laws involved, first of all, a protecting duty; secondly, that corn was a necessary of life; and thirdly, that it operated on production. Either the hon. Member had not read the book, or he had misquoted it. He could not possibly conceive the hon. Member capable of being guilty of misquoting, and, therefore, he should in charity conclude that the hon. Member had never read the book at all. Again the writer, at page 728, says—

"With a view to practical legislation, duties on importation may be divided into two classes—those which have the effect of encouraging some particular branch of domestic industry, and those which have not. The former are purely mischievous, both to the country imposing them, and to those with whom it trades. They present a saving of labour and capital, which, if permitted to be made, would be divided in some proportion or other between the importing country and the countries which buy what that country does or might export. The other class of duties are those which do not encourage one mode of procuring an article at the expense of another, but allow the interchange to take place just as if the duty did not exist; and to produce the saving of labour, which constitutes the motive to international as to all other commerce.... A protecting duty can never be a cause of gain."

This was the book which was to be the support of the hon. Member on some other night when he was to bring forward his own irrefutable arguments, to prove that they could not combat hostile tariffs with free trade. Now, he would ask the hon. Member, when he again entered into the consideration of an author's views, not to quote a work unless he had really read it, and not to enlist any gentleman's name in an argument of that sort, unless he knew what that gentleman's opinions were. He had no doubt but that hon. Gentlemen opposite had learned by this time to value

speeches by their length, for if that were not the case the game would not have gone on so long. ["Oh!"] That sort of noise might, perhaps, mean something, but he really could not see what. He had risen merely to correct a former quotation of the hon. Member for Shrewsbury, and, having done so, he had no wish to trespass farther on the time of the House.

Mr. DISRAELI said: Sir, I am extremely sorry to be obliged to solicit the attention of the House on this occasion. It is a long time since we have had the pleasure of hearing the hon. and learned Gentleman; and I am sure that, although I may not have reason individually to congratulate myself upon the result of his recent retirement, still we are not sorry to see him again among us. The hon. and learned Gentleman has been extremely personal, so far as I am concerned, in the comments which he has addressed to the House. I do not make that observation in the spirit of complaint against the hon. and learned Member. I am quite used to such treatment at his hands. He has seldom addressed the House in reference to myself when he has not indulged in observations which I have passed unnoticed, except, indeed, upon one recent occasion, when, after imputations cast upon me by the hon. and learned Member in one or two instances which I conceived not to be Parliamentary, I felt it necessary to make some remarks, which seemed somewhat to irritate the hon. and learned Gentleman. I cannot presume for a moment to occupy the House with the origin or nature of my political opinions. All I can say is, that the hon. and learned Gentleman speaks upon a subject of which he knows nothing. The hon. Member has heard some stories, for which there is no foundation, and which have nothing to do with the subject before the House. I trust, however, to the generous indulgence of the House, if for a moment I dwell upon the remarks of the hon. and learned Gentleman. It is easy for the hon. and learned Gentleman to get up and say, alluding to the hon. Member for Montrose, for whom I entertain, and I believe we all entertain, great respect, that I was at one time ready to follow him. Why, suppose it were so, that would be no very serious imputation against me, for the Prime Minister of England has recently given in his adhesion to that hon. Member. But I don't wish to avail myself of any special pleading, nor even to say that, when a very young man, I entertained different opinions

from those which I now entertain. I can't say that. I am not in a condition to have had hereditary opinions carved out for me, and all my opinions, therefore, have been the result of reading and of thought. I never was a follower of either of the two great aristocratic parties in this country. My sympathies and feelings have always been with the people, from whom I spring: and when obliged as a Member of this House to join a party, I joined that party with which I believed the people sympathize. My sympathies are the same now as they were when I first addressed a public meeting long before I entered this House; and I have never given a vote in this House which has not been in harmony with those feelings. I know there are many who don't understand the sympathy which is alleged to subsist between me and the hon. Member for the county of Cork; and, therefore, I entreat the indulgence of the House, after this arranged impromptu of the hon. and learned Gentleman, while I explain it. Our acquaintance was an accident; but though there may be a personal quarrel between us, I cannot on that account change opinions which were founded on historical facts; and I did believe then, as I do believe now, that it was the greatest mistake on the part of the English Government to attempt to rule Ireland by a faction. My opinion then was, that you ought to rule Ireland on the principles upon which she was ruled under one of our best and greatest kings—and I think so still. What error was it in me, then a very young man, if, meeting accidentally with a great man who entertained similar views, I declared my own opinions with that unreserve and frankness which I hope I may never lose? Now, to bring these charges against me, if they are properly considered, is perfectly idle; and I advert to them only with a resolution never to mention them again. I continue to hold substantially the same opinions as I have always professed; and when the hon. and learned Gentleman talks of my going into his camp, I never heard that he had a camp. This solitary sentry, who would persuade us he guards a garrison! Who are the Members of this House who sympathize with the hon. and learned Gentleman? What are the opinions he represents? He, a leader of the people! I have always thought there is no greater opponent of real democracy than modern liberalism; and as to popular principles, I believe they are never more endangered than

when they are professed by a political economist. But the hon. and learned Gentleman makes a charge against me, because he says that he is the friend of a gentleman whose opinions I have misrepresented. Now, I am in the recollection of the House, whether I spoke in any terms of disrespect of that gentleman; whether I did not, on the contrary, speak of him in terms of high respect; and whether I made any attempt to pervert the meaning of his words. But it was a most unexpected debate, and I spoke without the least previous intention of so doing. The hon. and learned Gentleman, however, says that I have not read the book: that is a stereotype sneer; but I think, if he will lend me the book, as I dare say he will, I could quote some passages, if the leaves are cut and open, and the book has been read—quite as germane to the matter as any which he has read to the House. [The book was handed to the hon. Member.] The author, in his preface, states that he proposes to offer some additional considerations upon the question which had arisen between Colonel Torrens and his antagonists. Now, I am sure that the House recollects—I am sure that the Prime Minister recollects, because I remember his speaking to me on the subject in the lobby of the House; and that the noble Lord recollects, because some of the letters are addressed to him—that the principle of reciprocity was the basis of the argument used by Colonel Torrens, on the promulgation of the Whig budget; and Mr. Mill says, that—

“Opinions identical with those of Colonel Torrens had been long held by him; and that his writings on the subject were only an elaboration of the fundamental doctrine of that essay;”

and in another place, answering the objections of the pure political economists, so to call them, he adds—

“It is true that exports and imports must, in the end, balance one another. If imports increase, exports must increase also; but then it is a forced increase, produced by the efflux of money, and a fall of prices. And this fall of prices being permanent, though it may be no evil in a country where credit is unknown, becomes a serious evil where large classes of the people and the country itself are under engagements to pay fixed sums of money.”

Now, that is only one of the passages which I could quote if I had the time to look through the book; but I cannot now for that purpose trespass further on the indulgence of the House. Surely, then, there never was a misrepresentation which it had taken so much time to prepare. Three months of solitude for an attack

upon the consistency of my political conduct—five days of seclusion for an assault on the accuracy of my literary criticism. Was there ever a conception at once so elaborate and so barren! Of all the abortions I have ever witnessed, never was there one to equal this; never was a senator struck with rhetorical paralysis more remarkable; never was anything more malignant, and certainly never was anything more futile.

MR. S. HERBERT did not rise to pursue the personal altercation which had been carried on on both sides with great powers of sarcasm. He would rather take the advice of the hon. Member who had spoken last, given in the early part of his address, as to the necessity, in the debates in that House, of avoiding all personalities and the use of all violent and intemperate language. With respect to the discussion which had arisen on the doctrines of Mr. Mill, he had no doubt the hon. Member for Shrewsbury, with the ingenuity for which he was eminent, and with the degree of skill he showed on all subjects, would make an excellent case for himself, and show that Mr. Mill was an advocate for reciprocity; but he doubted whether he would show him to be an advocate for hostilities between countries as exemplified by restrictive tariffs. The question the House had to decide was not whether reciprocity was the most favourable system on which commerce could be carried on, but whether they, who were in advance of other countries in the principles of commerce, could induce other countries to assist us by establishing perfect freedom. He would not, however, go into that subject now, as the hon. Member had promised on a future occasion to enter more fully upon it; but if the efflux of money were the evil arising from past experience, the House would bear in mind that those evils had recently arisen, because the demand had been sudden, and we were forced to make exchanges for the purchase of corn we wanted on an emergency by means of specie. He would not repeat the theory of exchanges: nothing had been better put on that subject than it was by Mr. D. Hume in his *Theory of Commerce*, and he had destroyed the theory, which had been resuscitated for use on the present occasion. He was glad, however, to find that hon. Gentlemen who were such great advocates for native restrictions, could venture to borrow from foreigners, and import their political economy from the other side of the Channel.

He rose that night more especially because he had been alluded to by one or two Gentlemen in rather a pointed manner in reference to the observations he had made on the first discussion of the Corn Laws; and he congratulated hon. Members on their memory, if they could recollect anything so far back. Yet attacks were made on persons with whom he was connected, in consequence of the observations then made by him. The hon. Member for the county of Oxford had alluded to the state of the labouring population of late years, and had said it was true that the Returns on the Table showed a great reduction of duty, and that there had been a great increase of commerce and a great increase of trade; yet that it had been forgotten to consider other circumstances which had contributed to these good results more than a reduction of the restrictions on imports. But when the hon. Member said that crime had increased with the increased population, he could scarcely have looked at the Returns for the last few years that evening laid on the Table. [MR. HENLEY: I spoke of thirty years.] He (Mr. S. Herbert) wished to speak of the last three or four years, that he might have stronger proof of the effect of the commercial alterations. There had been—and for the first time for some years—a marked diminution of crime in the country. But there had been an allusion made by the hon. Baronet who sat behind the hon. Member, a reference to the agricultural districts of the south of England, and to the great degree of suffering which existed; and he had said that he (Mr. Herbert) had adduced this as an argument for an alteration of the Corn Laws, and coupled this with remarks not very complimentary to the farmers in his part of the country for their hardness of heart in paying their labourers such low wages. Now, no one could regret more than he did the low wages paid; he had spoken with great sincerity of the suffering in his own county; but one of the hon. Gentlemen had made him responsible for their suffering, and had asked why he did not provide a remedy. Now, with respect to wages, he was not speaking of wages paid by gentlemen, among whom the rate of wages was above the current market price, but he spoke of the wages paid by farmers; and he must say, that they could not expect wages higher than the market price to be paid by those engaged in the ordinary farming trade, and it was no discredit to the farmers that

they did not force up wages. It was not the men who were to blame, but the system. The hon. Member for Oxfordshire said, that the great test of prosperity was the amount of population; but these low wages existed in the counties where the population bore the largest proportion to the quantity of soil to be cultivated; and he thought, if the hon. Member had watched the course of events in this country and in Ireland on the subject of the amount of population and prosperity corresponding, he would hardly, after that experience, have advocated this opinion: his own opinion was, that the labouring population in the south were most distressed, not from the want of a conscientious discharge of their duty by the farmers, but because protection caused a slovenly agriculture, and thus diminished the labour which ought to be employed on the farms. His right hon. Friend had never stated, as might be supposed from the speech of the hon. Member for Oxfordshire, that all the agriculturists, except those who possessed capital and skill, would be ruined by the present measure. What he stated was, that if those who had no skill and no ingenuity chose to go on in the beaten track, then that, leaving competition with foreigners out of the question, they would never be able to compete with those of their own countrymen possessing greater skill and capital. There had been many of these prophecies of ruin to the agricultural interest. Mr. Burke lost his seat for Bristol for advocating free trade with Ireland, which, it was said, would ruin the trade and agriculture of England. The Duke of Richmond predicted injurious consequences from repealing the duty on wool; yet the price of wool and of sheep was never higher than at the present moment. Then there were prophecies of ruin from the importation of cattle, which had no better foundation. The opinion of great agricultural and even protectionist authorities now was, that it would be well if we had much larger importations of foreign cattle. Yes, they were in want of additional stock to furnish manure for their land. It was all very well to say that there had been a murrain in the cattle; that was another reason for importing supplies from abroad. The scientific farmer always said, "We cannot cultivate our farms properly when we have such enormous prices to pay for our stock." These falsifications of previous prophecies had done much to conciliate the minds of the agriculturists to the changes about to be

made. The noble Lord (Lord G. Bentinck) was a master in the science of agitation; but he looked in vain during these debates for a repetition of the statements made at public meetings before Easter, when they were threatened with foreign wheat imported at 25s. per quarter. The farmers, whatever Gentlemen below the gangway might think, were a much more acute and reasonable race than to believe such statements. If any candid Gentleman unconnected with political parties were to perambulate the country districts at the present moment, he would find the prevailing sentiment to be, not the apprehension of inability to compete with the foreign grower, but the wish that this Bill should pass, in order that they might have some certainty in their proceedings. Nor were the farmers the only class who were suffering from the present delay; the manufacturers and every class participated in the injury from this cause. The hon. Member for Oxfordshire had alluded to the question how far the measures proposed by Government were applicable to the state of things in Ireland. But the hon. Member must admit that the noble Lord who addressed the House to-night (the Earl of Lincoln) had given an account of the state of that country which rendered it necessary to take some measures for relieving the existing distress. If it were true that even the seed of next year was scarce, there was a probability, or at all events a possibility, of suffering and want arising from the absence of the staple food of the country, which threatened to become a permanent evil. If so, it was the duty of the Government to apply a permanent remedy. The noble Lord (Lord G. Bentinck), in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Limerick, said he was willing to consent to a suspension of the Corn Laws for three months with respect to Ireland. The noble Lord must have had some sounder reason for granting it than that it could be of no use. First, he said it would do no good to Ireland; then he said that no disease existed in the potatoes in that country; but although he avowed his belief that there was no necessity for a suspension of the Corn Laws, and that those who entertained such an opinion were labouring under a delusion, he expressed his willingness to accede to a temporary suspension of those laws with relation to Ireland. He (Mr. S. Herbert) must confess that he did not understand the noble Lord. The hon. Member for Oxfordshire had expressed his

opinion that the measures proposed by the Government would not be attended with beneficial results, and had said that he considered the course taken by Her Majesty's Ministers were not consistent with honour. [Mr. HENLEY intimated his dissent.] As the hon. Member for Oxfordshire denied having made such an observation, he must at once admit that he was mistaken. "But," continued the right hon. Gentleman, "this I must say, that Gentlemen, in judging of what constitutes public honour, must look to the situation in which public men are placed, when dealing with great difficulties and emergencies, and they must not consider that, under a great change of circumstances, and in a pressing emergency, when the public interests are at stake, those who are responsible for the conduct of public affairs are to be bound by this or that speech which they may have made on questions of a fiscal or commercial nature. To those who think that the measures of the Government will not relieve the distress they are intended to alleviate, I concede the fullest right to quarrel with our policy. I concede to every one of my hon. Friends—for notwithstanding the obloquy and abuse which have been heaped upon us, I cannot forget that they have long been my friends, politically and privately—the fullest right to act upon their own opinions. All I ask is, that they will give us that credit which all men of honour concede to one another—the credit of having acted from conscientious conviction, and with strict purity of motive. I ask that they will not cast upon us any mean or pettifogging imputations of having acted from narrow and interested motives; but that they will give us credit for having acted like men who look upon politics not as a means of gain or of obtaining distinction, but as affording an opportunity for exercising the noblest functions which in this country can be confided to individuals—of doing all in their power to promote the public welfare. I ask from you, therefore, fair consideration of our conduct. Abuse I am prepared to meet, and there is some of which I would rather be the object than the author. But I am convinced that when the heated passions of these discussions have subsided; when the truth shall have shone through all the mystification with which our measures have been met; when illogical inferences from untold facts are forgotten; when we are no longer puzzled by arithmetical mystifi-

cation of what seems plain to every ordinary mind; when the lapse of time has caused the great pressure of present exigencies to be fully appreciated; when the effects of these laws during a time of scarcity shall have been experienced—then it will be acknowledged that we should indeed have been traitors to our party and to our country if we had induced hon. Gentlemen, at a moment when hunger and famine were threatening a large portion of the community, to oppose the alteration of laws which have for their object the restriction of the import of food, with a view to the enhancement of its price. I do not impute improper or unworthy motives to any hon. Gentlemen who oppose our proposition. I think that, in consequence of the course of legislation adopted in this country at the termination of the war, it was necessary, gradually and cautiously, to relax and remove those restrictions by which the importation of food was prevented. I believe that violent and sudden measures to effect that object, previous to those improvements which science, skill, and experience have enabled us to effect in agriculture, would have been dangerous; but I maintain that we have now arrived at a point when every year we grow our agricultural produce at a less cost; and you will find by an examination of the continental prices during a long series of years, that while our wheat has been produced at a progressively cheaper rate, there has been a gradual rise in the price of foreign grain. The pressure of distress in a neighbouring country now renders it incumbent upon us to afford facilities for the importation of food, that we may endeavour to wean the inhabitants of that country from the low description of diet upon which they have subsisted, and accustom them to more wholesome food. I consider, so far as the state of parties is concerned—whether we look at the agitation of the League, or of the protection of societies—that now is the time when this object may be effected without any imputation being thrown on those who support such a measure of fear of physical violence or submission to mob dictation. In the whole course of my short experience of public affairs, I do not remember any period when these questions were discussed—as all political questions are now discussed—with so much regard to the sound reasons and arguments on which they can be supported or opposed, and with so little reference to the dangerous influence of an unreflecting, but a phy-

sically and numerically powerful majority. I need not say that I hope the House will pass this measure; but I trust also, that many of those gentlemen who differ from us *toto cælo* as to the grounds on which we are acting, will give that just and fair consideration to our motives to which, as men of honour, we are entitled. I trust they will make due allowance for the circumstances under which it has been our duty to meet existing necessities—if necessities do exist; that they will not consider that we have neglected our duty because we have faced the danger with measures which I admit to be bold and to be vast in their operation; but which were brought forward at a time when the position of the country was most critical, and which, even before their adoption, have already had a great and sensible effect in checking the evils they were designed to meet, by keeping the price of food within such limits that the poorest labourers in this country and in Ireland have the prospect of obtaining, by the exercise of industry, sufficient food to preserve themselves and their families from the horrors of that scarcity which has resulted from the failure of a crop on which many of them have been accustomed to depend for subsistence."

Mr. HENLEY said, the right hon. Gentleman laboured under a mistake in attributing to him the observations to which he had referred in the course of his speech. What he had said was, that two Cabinet Ministers had recommended the hon. Gentleman with whom he acted to pursue a course which he considered they could not take consistently with honour; but he had given no opinion as to the course adopted by Her Majesty's Government being consistent or inconsistent with honour.

LORD G. BENTINCK said: My right hon. Friend the Secretary at War has been pleased, Sir, to refer to me, and to accuse me of having excited the public mind. I cannot say that I reproach myself with that, and I cannot claim any merit for not having agitated the country. Sir, I never attended any public meeting, and never addressed any speech, or any written letter, to any party on the subject now before the country—I never uttered a word in public upon it, until I felt it to be my duty to address this House. If, then, I have agitated the country, that agitation is restricted to the speeches I have made in this House. But, Sir, I

must confess I was not a little surprised to hear my right hon. Friend taking this tone, inasmuch as I could not but think that the imputation of being an agitator was much more applicable to my right hon. Friend himself, who was formerly wont to be toasted, on public occasions, as equal in eloquence, and superior in honesty, to the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government. The right hon. Gentleman was the agricultural protector; and on him, in the course of last December, when the Government was in a state of dissolution, did the agriculturists rely; and when we call to mind the speeches which my right hon. Friend made both in this House and on the hustings, we cannot be surprised that the whole agricultural mind of England had the notion that he, and not I, was to be its leader. Why, Sir, my right hon. Friend now stands up in this House and holds a high tone on the subject of the Corn Laws; and he would have you to believe that the way to improve the agriculture of this country—and more especially in Wiltshire, where the cultivation of the soil is conducted in a slovenly manner—is to repeal the Corn Laws. It was only on the 3rd of June last that, in answer to the hon. Member for Sheffield (Mr. Ward), my right hon. Friend addressed this House, and called upon it, as well as upon the agricultural interest out of the House, to resist the Motion of the hon. Gentleman to go on as they were then going on, making, as he said they were, the most manful exertions, and to resist the seductions of the hon. Member for Stockport, who had been endeavouring to prove to them that the way to improve their land and to increase their profits was to reduce the value of their produce. The right hon. Gentleman the Secretary at War has referred to the case of Ireland, and has again, as one of the Ministers of the country, repeated the misrepresentation of the motive of the measures which we (the Protectionists) were prepared to pass in regard to that part of the kingdom. The right hon. Gentleman has stated that we were ready to suspend the Corn Laws in order to give relief to the people of Ireland. Sir, how often have we repeated that, in assenting to that measure, we were, at the same time, convinced that it would not afford any relief to that country? How often are we to repeat that—at least in our opinion—there is no portion of the United Empire that would be so much injured by such

a course as Ireland? ["No!"] What! will Ireland not be injured by a repeal of the Corn Laws? What, let me ask, is going on in Ireland now but the clearances of property and the laying down of tillage land in grass, because it is found to be more profitable to feed cattle than to grow corn? When you reduce the price of wheat and of oats by admitting foreign wheat and foreign oats into competition with them, do you not think that you will be increasing the desire, on the part of those who have land, to throw that land out of cultivation, and to grow cattle instead of corn? And will not new clearances, think you, take place—will not this mischief be scattered over the whole land of Ireland? The noble Earl (Earl of Lincoln) has told you, that he is responsible for all the information that has been given to this House respecting that part of the kingdom by Her Majesty's Government. I think, however, that my noble Friend is a very credulous Minister. He said, when at Falkirk, that he believed in a compact, which had no existence but in the imagination of my noble Friend. I will not charge him with wilful misrepresentation, nor of making a handle of that which he knew not to be true, in order to advance his election at Falkirk: all I will say is, that he gave too ready an ear to all that came near him—and now, when I consider that, I can the more easily understand how it arises that we have heard such exaggerated reports of the famine in Ireland. Sir, we have never denied that there was scarcity in certain parts of Ireland. What we have said has been this—that there is partial scarcity, but no famine—and this I verily believe to be the true state of the case. We have heard from my hon. Friend the Member for North Northamptonshire (Mr. Stafford O'Brien) an account of the state of the counties of Limerick and Clare, in corroboration of the statements of the noble Earl; and I rejoice to be able to afford to my hon. Friend some consolation for the fears he may entertain in regard to a famine in Limerick. I have here a return of the produce of Limerick, which has come to England in the course of the last six months. Sir, there have arrived between the 5th of September and the 24th of April last, from the Shannon and its tributaries, no fewer than 71,000 quarters of wheat, 6,000 quarters of barley, 268,000 quarters of oats, 55,000 cwt. of flour, and 34,000 cwt. of oatmeal—making, altogether, up-

wards of 345,000 quarters of grain imported into Great Britain from the port of Limerick and its tributaries alone—and upwards of 89,000 cwt. of flour. This, Sir, is sufficient to show that it is not food that is wanted in Ireland, but that what that country is suffering from is the want of money and want of employment for the people. I am ready to give the noble Earl great credit for the assistance which he afforded to my hon. Friend the Member for Northamptonshire at a period of necessity; and I admit that the Government has sent some 43,000 quarters of maize to assist the Irish people; but I also find that, in the meantime, 10,000 quarters of oats have been imported from Ireland into the port of London alone—whilst into the ports of Liverpool and Glasgow 40,000 quarters of oatmeal have also been brought from Ireland; so that in the course of last week there was actually more corn imported from that part of the country which was said to be starving than had been distributed there by Her Majesty's Ministers. What we have said, then, and what we now say again is, that there is abundance in Ireland; and I defy the hon. Gentlemen opposite to contradict me. There is, indeed, greater abundance of food in Ireland than has ever been known. Now, if the Government had purchased this grain in Ireland, instead of buying grain at home and having to re-import it into that country, they would have had the advantage of obtaining it at the cost price; and they might have sold it at that price to the advantage of the people. My right hon. Friend is a farmer himself, to a certain extent; and what would he think if he was obliged to get back his oats from the market where he sent them! Now, my right hon. Friend the Secretary at War has made some references, in the course of his speech, to the wages of labour, and has stated what they are in Wiltshire. Though I hold no property in Wiltshire, I am a tenant-farmer on the borders of that county; and, I dare say, I employ more labourers than my right hon. Friend. I know what are the wages we pay there. I know that, in 1836 and 1837, the wages we paid in that part of the country were 9s. a week; but the price of wheat rose—not from 40s. to 78s., as my right hon. Friend has argued, but yet some 8s. or 10s. a quarter—and the wages last year were raised 1s. a week, and I believe I am only paying, in giving that sum, the same wages as others, and

that amount I am still giving. At all events that is the rate of wages I am now paying my labourers in that part of the country; therefore I cannot help coming to the conclusion that there has been no little exaggeration on the subject of wages. There is also a great exaggeration on the subject of famine in Ireland. I have said so before, and I will now repeat it. I charge Her Majesty's Government with wilful exaggeration as respects the famine of Ireland. While I am on the subject, I want to know, Sir, why we have not had all the reports which I am aware Her Majesty's Ministers have received. I should like to see the reports of the Commander in Chief in Ireland, of all the Poor Law Commissioners that have been sent there, and of the inspectors of prisons. I know something about these reports, and I am therefore desirous to have an answer to my question. I, too, have had information from Ireland; but it is of a very different character from that furnished by the Government. I hold in my hand the letter of a gentleman carrying on the business of a cornfactor at Youghal, in the county of Cork, and in that letter it is stated that the writer has had communications from houses in Glasgow, stating that the stock of wheat on hand is unusually large. The writer encloses two circulars to that effect, and adds, that, in so far as the statement of distress in Scotland is coupled with the cry of famine in Ireland, there is obviously no foundation for it. The writer then went on to state that—

"He was fully persuaded, so superabundant was the potato crop in Ireland, that if one-third of the whole had been destroyed, the loss would not materially affect the supply of food; and that the hue and cry raised by the Government upon the subject, and echoed by the agitators, had contributed very much to the apparent scarcity of provisions, by causing the more opulent farmers to keep back their stock of potatoes with the hope of obtaining increased prices."

That is the statement and these the opinions of a man who is interested in the rise of prices of provisions. Coupling this with other information which I have received, I have no hesitation in saying that the Government has greatly exaggerated the case of distress in Ireland. My noble Friend said that the people of Ireland are now deriving the benefit of the importation of Indian meal made by the Government, inasmuch as the supply of that article has opened the hoarded potato stores; but I have had a letter from the Earl of Shan-

non, in which it is stated by that nobleman that potatoes are in abundance in his neighbourhood, only that hitherto they have been hoarded. And it is also stated in it that Her Majesty's Ministers only a week since refused to take the Indian meal out of store, in order to keep up the cry of famine in Ireland, for the purpose of carrying their Corn Law measure in England. Thus the House will perceive that there are two stories in Ireland as far as regards the conduct of the Government. With respect to the importation of Indian meal, in relation to which the Government has spoken so highly of their own exertions—what, after all, does it amount to, taken as a proof of their proposition? If there is, as they allege, a famine in Ireland, what will 40,000 or 50,000 quarters of maize do towards relieving it? Why, there has been as much grain imported from Ireland during the last week into the ports of Glasgow, Liverpool, and London, alone. My right hon. Friend has taunted us with taking our principles of political economy from the French writers—from the other side of the water: but I wish my right hon. Friend and the Government had taken a lesson out of M. Guizot's book, in relation to this measure. If they had done so, the country would have wiser and firmer institutions than it now has. But there are other great authorities besides M. Guizot and M. Thiers, for the protection of native industry: there are Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, Mr. Canning, Mr. Huskisson; and there are other authorities of older date, and farther back in the history of the country: there is Cromwell, and all the great men of his age. The navigation laws, originated by Cromwell, have been the cause of this country's greatness. And, Sir, when I name Pitt, Fox, Canning, and Huskisson, I am only naming those great men whom the two right hon. Baronets were continually in the habit of referring to so long as they were in the vigour of their intellect; and I think I may assert that their advocacy of free trade is only their sexagenarian policy. It was ever the doctrine of the great masters before us—of Canning and of Huskisson—that we should care not how cheap corn might be, so long as that corn was grown at home—and let me tell the hon. Gentlemen opposite that we deny altogether that we are endeavouring, in maintaining protection, to serve our own interests, for that we believe that the manufacturing and the agricultural interests are intimately connected with each other. We

believe that the result of these measures will be that the landlords will suffer, that the farmers will suffer, that the labourers will suffer, and that the shopkeepers will suffer. You want to change your old customers for new; but before you do, calmly reflect whether the new will be better than the old. What are the exportations of manufactured goods, of every kind of produce in this country, as compared with our home consumption? Your argument is, "If you will allow us to take grain from abroad, the foreigners who sell us the grain will take our manufactured goods in return. But that argument does not appear to apply now, for you take more produce, as far as value goes, from America, and all the corn-growing countries of Europe, than they take manufactured articles from you. Well, Sir, this is a dangerous principle; for if we are to legislate for the future by the experience of the past, we are not warranted in supposing that the producers of that corn will take an equivalent for it in our manufactures. Your arguments, then, go for nothing; because if you do not buy of your own customers, how can you expect that they will buy from you? You are repeatedly changing old customers for new—you are casting away a substance for a shadow—you are about to verify the old story so happily told by my noble Friend the Member for the city of London—you are like Aladdin, exchanging the old lamp for the new. Sir, these are the reasons which influence me in advocating the continuance of the protective system. I know that we benefit by the prosperity of the manufacturers—I know that when they are prosperous and when your labourers are in the receipt of full wages, they consume more corn and more meat, and the increased demand increases the price of the produce. Our prosperity adds to yours. When we prosper we purchase your fabrics; and are we not as customers worthier by a thousand times than the customers of foreign countries? Is this a time when wheat—no, I will not say wheat, but rye—has risen one hundred per cent., to change the protection laws? Is this the time, when the granaries are fuller than ever they have been known to be at the same period of the year, and when the granaries of other countries are comparatively empty—is this a time, when your prices are equal and steady, while those of other countries are fluctuating—is this the time, I ask, when by prudent laws you have plenty here at home, while other

lands are not so well supplied—is this, I ask, the time that you select for destroying a commercial policy which has been so eminently successful in its operation? I said that the price of wheat had fallen in this country. I hold in my hands returns from the 288 towns under the notice of the corn proprietors for four years, and what is the result? I find that in 1842, allowing for the first three months in the year, when there were but 155 towns in the list, that the amount of grain brought to market was 4,568,248 quarters. In 1843, 5,302,298 quarters; in 1844, 5,456,307 quarters, showing a gradual increase in the produce of the land; but in the year 1845, the increase rose to 6,470,469 quarters, thus showing an increase of 1,300,000 quarters on the average of three years. Now, then, can it be said that any laws can work better than those which now exist? I will now refer to another return, inasmuch as I find that Her Majesty's Ministers still harp on the Irish question. I had hoped that the Ministers would have given that point up on the ground of the so-called Irish famine being in a great measure an imposture. It seems, however, that we are to hear more of it. Now, I wish the House to understand that I have not sought those returns, that I have not asked for them, but that persons are continually sending them to me by post. Respecting those returns, a Mr. Skipper, of Liverpool, wrote to me; and, speaking of the immense arrivals from Ireland, said, that no less than 10,900 quarters of wheat, 6,000 quarters of oats, and flour and oatmeal in proportion, had arrived lately at Liverpool. After referring to that enormous supply, Mr. Skipper proceeded to say—

"The supply sufficiently confirms the universal opinion here, that abundance of feeding stuffs are held in Ireland, and only withheld in anticipation of the scarcity so confidently predicted at the opening of the Session."

He further added—

"I may mention, the Import list is made up authoritatively, and not by each individual merchant."

So here, you see, this is the present opinion in Liverpool, one of the greatest towns in the country, and one in which the deepest apprehension was at one time entertained respecting the cry of famine. The merchants of Liverpool now, however, find that the cry was originally created for the purpose of raising prices. We know

who it was who raised that cry in the early part of the Session. Sir, the documents I have received are not partial ones. I hold in my hand a circular dated from Birmingham, but the signature of which has been studiously erased. It is dated "Birmingham, third of fourth month;" and therefore I presume the author is a Quaker. Indeed, I have little doubt but that Mr. Sturge was the writer. Let us see what it is he says of the state of the corn crop. He states that the corn returns for six months, ending 2nd inst., exhibited an increase of thirty per cent., but that during the last three months they only exhibited an increase of six per cent., as compared with the corresponding three months of last year. This is good authority that there was no dearth in the land on the 2nd of April. My right hon. Friend the Secretary at War has stated, that notwithstanding the alarming statements which have gone abroad, and the agitation which has prevailed on the subject of the repeal of the Corn Laws, that there have been no county meetings held to advocate the maintenance of the present system; but I take leave to ask him whether there has not been an election for South Nottingham? Who carried that election? Was it not the tenant farmers of the county? Why, all the personal regard entertained for my noble Friend (Lord Lincoln), and all the money spent so profusely by my noble Friend at that election, were utterly unavailing to procure a popular demonstration in favour of the newly adopted principles of the Ministry. I am not going to charge the noble Lord with bribery; but can he deny it was a most expensive election? [The Earl of LINCOLN reminded the noble Lord that, having already spoken that night, he was precluded by the House from making a speech in reply to such charges.] I am sure the House will permit my noble Friend to have an opportunity of setting himself right with them, in case he should feel himself aggrieved by anything that may fall from me. This indulgence I pray may be granted to him. But, Sir, do we not all know that every electioneering agent in Nottinghamshire was retained in the service of my noble Friend? South Nottingham was taken by surprise; but the tenant farmers of the county carried the field against my noble Friend, by a majority amounting to something between 600 and 700. And are we to have set against that magnificent demonstration of popular feeling, the asser-

tion that the noble Lord's majority of 121 in the borough of Hamilton has swamped the constituencies of other boroughs, and gives an unmistakable indication that public opinion goes with the policy of the Ministry? Such an assertion were preposterous. No public meetings! Was there not an election at North Nottinghamshire? And did not Gloucestershire and Dorsetshire follow the example? Who was better entitled to have a seat in this House than my Lord Ashley? And who would have been at the head of the poll in Dorsetshire if he had maintained his ancient principles, so surely as that noble Lord? No one! But Englishmen are true at heart, and detest tergiversation. They hate broken pledges and broken faith, and cannot endure to be betrayed. And when I remember that my hon. Friend who successfully opposed the noble Lord at South Nottinghamshire when last he stood upon the hustings at Newark, congratulated the electors of the county, and made it his first subject of felicitation, that they had refused to be cajoled by the last fabrication from the workshop of trickery and delusion, and told them that he gloried in his country, for it was not two counties only which had scouted the cry of cheap bread, but that the cities and boroughs too had refused to be quieted by the last fugitive humbug of a dying faction—when I remember that it was in this strain that the electors were addressed, can I wonder that they, being themselves men of firm purpose, of stable minds, and lovers of consistency in the people's representatives, that they repudiated the noble Lord, and declined to hold communion with those who had become turncoats at the beck of Her Majesty's First Minister? Sir, I am rejoiced that the people of England have shown themselves true to themselves—that they have manifested their irreconcilable aversion to, their unmitigated contempt for, political inconstancy, political vacillation, and political tergiversation; and that they concur with the great Burke—an authority so often quoted in this House—in thinking that he who would seek to act as the representative of a great constituency ought to be a man of stable mind—a man of firm resolve and faithful purpose—fit to be a pillar of the State, and not a weathercock on the summit of the edifice, capable of no other office than to indicate by his own versatility the last shiftings of the uncertain breeze.

THE EARL OF LINCOLN: Sir, I know it is irregular to rise a second time in the

course of a debate; but I trust, after the laboured attack made on me by the noble Lord—after the manner in which he has obviously kept back, for this especial occasion, the envenomed bitterness which I suppose former friendship is considered to justify—after the deliberate and prepared assault made on me by the noble Lord, when he knew that I was not entitled by the rules of the House to rise and reply—I do hope that the House will allow me to trespass on its indulgence for a few moments. I will promise the House not to enter into particulars with regard to any other points than one on which he has attacked me. I shall explain nothing of my hustings speeches; any explanations respecting them will be reserved for another and more fitting occasion, for at any time I do not consider them to be of such importance as to occupy the attention of this House. [*Ironical cheer from Lord G. BENTINCK.*] Sir, I have no objection to meet the noble Lord's charges upon another occasion. I am perfectly ready to meet him or any other man, and it is only in deference to the House, and the rules of the House, that I do not meet them now. The noble Lord is welcome to attack every word and every act of mine; I will justify every word, and defend myself. But I will on the present occasion confine myself to the charge which the noble Lord has made as to bribery at the South Nottinghamshire election. I think the noble Lord might have taken warning by the fate of a friend of his, who made the same charge at the election for South Notts. He made the charge upon the hustings, that I, or some of my friends, had bribed. I distinctly denied it. He stated that he had the fact from unexceptionable authority. I called upon him to give up that authority. He was silent. I said if this charge were true, bribery was punishable by the laws of the country, and that if bribery was committed by me or by my friends, we might be prosecuted. I challenged him to prosecute me or any of my friends. Did he take up that challenge? No; but he replied that the Free Trade Committee of Nottingham had bribed. Well, did they sit quietly under the imputation? No; they asked him for his authority; and the hon. Member for Nottingham repeated the demand in this House, and I must say a more miserable appearance was never cut by any person than by him who made the charge on that occasion. It is unworthy of the noble Lord to tread in the shoes of a young man who

came forward for the first time in political life by making this charge against me. But I tell the noble Lord, as I told him, that it is untrue, and that not one farthing was spent by me in bribing at the Nottinghamshire election. It was not an expensive election—it was not an expensive election at the rate which county contests necessarily and invariably cost. The necessary legal expenses are always heavy; but, compared with ordinary county elections, the expenses of the Nottinghamshire election were not high. The noble Lord says that I took the county by surprise. Sir, the county was taken by surprise, but not by me. The county was canvassed before I vacated my seat; and it was in consequence of that canvass that it became incumbent on me to engage so many agents. The charge of bribery as against me, is untrue, and there was nothing spent illegally on my part. But the noble Lord may, perhaps, know that something was spent in bribery. He may know that a noble and influential Member of his own family contributed largely to the expenses of that election against me; and it might have been wiser for the noble Lord, recollecting that circumstance, to have abstained from making the charge against me. I need not mention the sum to the noble Lord, for I suppose he knows the amount himself; but, recollecting the fact, I think it would have been more prudent in the noble Lord if he had not touched on that subject. Having contradicted the statement of the noble Lord most peremptorily, and I hope, satisfactorily, I now tell the noble Lord that I shall be prepared to meet any other charges he has to make against me. I feel I may have made only an imperfect reply to the noble Lord's studied attack; but I think I have answered the charge, to which I said I would confine myself, and I hope I have not trespassed too long on the House.

SIR C. BURRELL, with the permission of the House, would withdraw his Amendment.

MR. LAW said, it appeared to him that all parties would be placed on the same footing if the House adjourned. He therefore moved the adjournment.

MR. HUDSON seconded the Motion.

SIR R. PEEL hoped the hon. and learned Member would not press his Motion. He knew nothing of any compact, but his hon. Friend had a perfect right to state that he expected there would be no division, as he

had so understood it. The usual course however was, when an hon. Gentleman asked to withdraw a Motion, and no one who was in favour of the Motion wished to take the sense of the House, not to force a division. The only way to force it would be for some one adverse to the Motion to say, "The Noes have it." But that was a course of proceeding which only extraordinary circumstances could justify; and, therefore, as it appeared that a division had not been expected, he (Sir R. Peel) thought it ought not to be taken. For his own part, even if such a division were to lead to his having a larger majority, he would not desire such an advantage if it were obtained by a surprise. On the other hand, as there was an understanding that the third reading of the Bill should be taken on Monday, and as he had done all in his power to meet the wishes of those who were opposed to the measure, he hoped that the hon. and learned Member would not press his Motion for adjournment.

LORD G. BENTINCK begged to confirm the right hon. Baronet in what he had said as to its being understood that the third reading should be taken on Monday. He repeated that he had been no party to any arrangement not to divide to-night; his only fear had been lest hon. Gentlemen opposite should think there had been any wish to act unfairly.

MR. LAW then withdrew his Motion.

MR. LAW'S Motion and the Amendment withdrawn. Amendments made by the Committee on the Bill agreed to. Bill to be read a third time on Monday.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Monday, May 11, 1846.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL—THIRD READING.

On the Question that the Corn Importation Bill be now read a Third Time,

The MARQUESS of GRANBY rose to move that the Bill be read a third time that day six months. The question, he considered, was one that affected all who were concerned in agriculture. Before entering into the main question, he would make a few observations on the manufactures of the country. The noble Lord

(Lord G. Bentinck) had already said that the agricultural interest did not desire to see manufactures decline in this country. He wished to see the stream of manufacturing prosperity conducted into channels safe and useful. He did not wish to see it decline—he wished to see it flow like the noble river outside these walls—in one full and constant stream, never drying up or running into unprofitable channels. The protectionists did not wish to see manufactures flourish at the expense of agriculture. They thought that manufactures properly regulated would tend to the prosperity and benefit of the country. The agriculturists wished to see the calm waters of manufacturing prosperity reflect the image of their own prosperity. The agriculturists only desired to live and let live. But now to the question of the repeal of the Corn Laws. The object of the Corn Laws had been much misrepresented. The Anti-Corn-Law advocates said the Corn Law supporters wished to starve the people. He denied it. He asserted the object of the Corn Law supporters was to supply corn to the people at a constant and a moderate price. They proposed to do this by the assertion of two great principles. First, to raise the people's subsistence, as far as they could, from our own soil; to give employment to as many of our own people as they could in the healthy and manly employment of agriculture; and to render this country thereby independent of foreign nations. And, second, that as we knew scarcity must arise occasionally—when it did arise, and after using our own stock as far as it would go, then to open our ports and to admit foreign corn. One reason for not altering the present laws was, that the price of corn under them was gradually diminishing. There was one important point which he believed had not been mentioned in the debate—it had been touched upon in Mr. Alison's work on Population, and he would read the extract. Mr. Alison wrote:—

"Speculators purchase up grain largely on the Continent during years of plenty, and store them in the British bonded warehouses, in anticipation of the rise of prices on the first unfavourable season. There the ample store lies innocuous to the British farmer during seasons of prosperity, when its aid is not required by the British consumer; but no sooner does the expected period of adversity arrive, than it issues forth in vast quantities to avert the calamity, and diffuse the stream of plenty through every village and hamlet in the realm."

He then alludes to 1838, and continues—

“And it is particularly worthy of observation, that this fortunate effect in 1838 could not possibly have taken place if an unrestricted trade in corn had existed, and that it is the creation of the corn law, and the corn law alone. If a free importation of grain were permitted between Great Britain and the Continent, these great bonded reservoirs of grain in the British harbours would not exist. Food would be provided for a large part of our population by the foreign, instead of the British, cultivators. The temptation of sale, at a present profit, would prove irresistible to the foreign importer; and the British warehouses (of *Dantzic* wheat) would be emptied as rapidly upon the first rise of prices, as the stackyards of the British cultivators. The home supply being greatly diminished, and the foreign proportionably augmented, the average supply would just be about equal to the average demand, and no reserve store would be accumulated in any quarter to supply the wants of the people in seasons of scarcity. But while a free importation of grain could not provide such a reserve store, for the same reason that it cannot be provided by the domestic growers in the British islands, it is effectually secured by the present Corn Law; which, prohibiting importation in ordinary seasons, yet permits any quantity of foreign grain to be stored up in our bonded warehouses, and thus permits the surplus produce of the Continent, in years of plenty, to be set apart as a reserve for the British population in periods of scarcity.”

They had been told by the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) that those laws which he once considered impolitic, he now considered unjust. The right hon. Baronet's argument would be sound and perfect, if money rained from the skies; but, in the existing state of things, it was erroneous and mischievous. But it was said that protection was the bane of agriculture, and that agriculturists required competition to excite them to economy and industry. If protection was the bane of agriculture, it was not less the bane of manufactures. Was there any reason why it should be the bane of one interest, and not of the other? If so, what a great injustice was the right hon. Baronet about to inflict upon those manufactures, on which he was going to keep a duty of ten per cent. The right hon. Baronet said it was for the sake of revenue, and he could not help it; but he would recommend a plan which would clear away all the right hon. Baronet's difficulties. Mr. McCulloch, in his first chapter on Taxation, said, “Moderate taxation stimulates industry, makes the people more economical, and is an advantage.” That was the very thing that was wanted. And he (the Marquess of Granby) contended, that protection was a great benefit. On that point he would

refer to an opinion expressed by Lord Francis Roos, in the year 1610, at which time there were no Corn Laws:—

“Sir—I doubt not but by this time you are very deep in the faculty of law-making. I desire much that if any laws be passed, we may have the heads of the heads of them (the titles of the chiefest).”

“I had some conference with Sir R. Buller (to whom, I pray, and Sir T. Wise remember my service), concerning a Bill that no corn should be imported until it came to some extraordinary price. Of this, having since consideration, there seems to me many reasons very strong for the converting of this Bill into a statute.

“A first is, because the importation of corn is an exportation of money, and that, even in case of necessity, is a hurt to the commonwealth, though then tolerable for the avoiding of a greater hurt, but in unnecessary cases altogether inexcusable.

“Secondly, if importation be unlimited allowed, the cheapness of corn will take away the benefit of husbandry; and the benefit being taken away, husbandry itself (which is usually undertaken for benefit) will decay. And if husbandry decay, there are likely to grow two main inconveniences. The one, that the poor must starve for want of work, the effect whereof hath too much appeared in the conversion of tillage into sheep pasture. A second, that in a short time, this kingdom to be set to a rent, will be less worth per annum many thousand pounds; for I think, within this twenty years, husbandry hath, in many places, doubled the yearly value of land, which, if tillage decay, is likely to return to the ancient means.

“And whereas there is a seeming objection that importation makes cheapness, and cheapness seems to favour the poor, I affirm that this importation will especially hurt the poor, and for their sakes especially it is to be forbidden. For if corn be cheap, and the poor man have no money, what avails it to him that corn is cheap when he cannot buy it? If money be carried out of the country, and the poor man be not set on work by reason of the decay of tillage, I wonder how he shall buy this cheap corn without money? I think it were better that corn were for 7s. a bushel, and yet by reason of tillage the poor man should earn 18d. or 2s. a week, than, corn being at 5s., he should earn 12d., or perchance nothing. For, without question, half of the work at least will be abated. Besides, there are two inconveniences at this time which accompany cheapness, and make it unprofitable to the poorest sort of men. The one is, the wickedness of bakers, of whom I hear it reported that at this time they make their bread after 10s. the bushel. A second, of the town merchants, who buy ship loads of corn, and sell it so much under the ordinary price as may serve to undo the husbandman, and yet so near the price that the poor hath far less benefit by it than the commonwealth, yea, themselves have harm.

“Thus I have expressed to you the considerations which entered into my thoughts upon this business, which, if you think them worth the mentioning, I pray you to communicate to Sir R. Buller, which I do not to add to better judgment, but rather to submit them to their approbation. And I wish that this letter may be prevented by a statute before it comes to your hands.

"And so wishing you the direction of the Highest, and that the hand of the Almighty may be with you all unto the making of laws wholesome and restorative for this poor and sinful land, I take leave, ever resting, yours most assuredly to be commanded,

(Signed)

"F. Roos.

"April 30."

(Addressed) "To my loving and much-esteemed cousin, Richard Carey, Esq., London."

He now came to the consideration of the proportion which wages bore in relation to the price of food. The right hon. Baronet could no longer support the Corn Laws, because he was of opinion that the price of corn and the wages of labour did not vary in the same proportion; and one of the principal objects in the repeal of the Corn Laws was to enable the country, by reduced wages, to compete with the foreigner. The right hon. Baronet said, that the price of corn had varied 38s. between the years 1837 and 1844, whereas the wages of labour had only varied from 10s. to 11s. Now, if that were the case, there would be a good reason for no longer supporting the Corn Laws; but there must have been some mistake in that argument. He thought the variation could not have been so great, and that the labourer had been paid in other ways than by actual wages. He held in his hand a return which had been presented to the House of Lords, drawn up by a near relative of his own, which would throw some light on the variation between the prices of corn and the wages of labour in his own neighbourhood. That return showed the amount of wages received by forty-two labourers in the neighbourhood of Belvoir, in the month of April, in the years 1838 and 1839. In 1838, the price of corn was 60s.; and in 1839, it was 72s. In 1838, the wages averaged 11s. 7d.; and in 1839, the average was 12s. 6d. Now, whilst the difference in the price of corn was 12s., the difference in the price of labour was only 11d.; but, in addition to that, allowances were made to the labourer in various ways. In April, 1838, the average consumption of meat in each family was 3 lbs. 11 oz.; in April, 1839, 3 lbs. 6½ oz. The average consumption of flour in April, 1838, was 39 lbs. 6 oz.; and in April, 1839, the consumption was 42 lbs. As far as flour went, the labourer did consume in that year a great deal of barley instead of wheaten flour; and he (the Marquess of Granby) suffered the same penance, for he was not allowed to eat wheaten bread. But even supposing the calculations of the right hon. Baronet to be true throughout the whole of Eng-

land, no argument could be founded upon them. The cheapness or dearness of corn was generally owing to its abundance or scarcity; and it was the same thing to the farmer whether he sold fifty quarters at 40s., or forty quarters at 50s.; because, although the price of corn might fall, he would still be enabled to give his labourers the same wages. But let the Corn Laws be repealed, and the produce of other lands freely admitted, he would no longer be able to pay the labourer the same wages. If the poorer sorts of land were thrown out of cultivation, the labourers must be thrown out of employment, and the increased competition in the labour market would reduce the price of wages still lower than they were at present. If the right hon. Baronet had so chosen, he might still have defended the Corn Laws. If the hon. Gentlemen on the Treasury bench wished to prove that the poor man would be better off for having cheap bread, he would tell them how to act; let them give up their salaries for the space of a year, and still enjoy the luxuries which they enjoyed at present. He should then begin to believe in the impossible, and that there was something in the doctrines of free trade. But even then the cases would not be parallel, because they would have something to fall back upon besides their salaries, whilst the labourer had nothing but his labour to depend on, and when deprived of that, he would be deprived of everything. He deplored the distress which existed in Ireland, which had been made the foundation for the repeal of the Corn Laws. It had been said, if the ports were opened, it would be impossible to close them again. Now, he could not understand the soundness of the argument founded on the failure of the potato crop; and he believed that Her Majesty's Ministers began to fancy that the doctrine was unsound, and that they had rather changed their ground since the commencement of the debate. He believed their real argument now was, "we think the same kind of distress may exist for many years, and we do not like the people of England to be continually called upon to subscribe their money to feed the people of Ireland." He regretted that Her Majesty's Government had not, in conjunction with the Coercion Bill, introduced some measure calculated to ameliorate that distress. And if it was supposed that the repeal of the Corn Laws would relieve that distress, he would quote the observations of the noble Lord the

Member for Lynn, who said that it would throw out of employment upwards of 500,000 families, and add to the two millions at present destitute upwards of three millions more. That statement had not yet been contradicted; and while the people of this country would have to feed double the number they were at present called upon to support, their power to do so would be materially diminished. He now came to the encouragement held out to induce the House to consent to the repeal of the Corn Laws. It was said the people could get their bread cheap. Immediately afterwards he was told, in some instances by the same person, that the people were not born, that the countries were not yet discovered, from which this great supply was to come. In his confusion, he naturally turned to the projector of these measures to find some consolation; but, alas! the shades of evening only ended in the depths of night—confusion became worse confounded, and the right hon. Baronet would tell nothing about it, because he could not. He asked the right hon. Baronet and the House, whether it was fitting to pass a measure which would produce so great a social revolution, on such statements as those which had been laid before the House—a measure which would rend asunder the ties which had existed for centuries—a measure which would tend to aggravate the great evil of the present day, the love of money, no matter how it might be made—a measure setting man against man—a measure which, under pretence of buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market, would unite our manufacturers with foreign agriculturists, instead of strengthening the ties which now existed between them and their agricultural friends. On such statements as those which had been adduced, he asserted that it was not becoming for the House of Commons to pass such a measure. In default of information on which to found his arguments, he was compelled to have recourse to the only arguments he had heard on the subject—the arguments of his hon. Friends around him. From them he had learned that the price of wheat, in the event of the Corn Law being repealed, would probably be from 35s. to 40s. a quarter. If that were true, he had a statement in his hand which would show how the farmer would be affected. The statement had been made at an agricultural meeting; and in order to be sure of the figures, he had written to the person who

had made it for a copy. It was founded on what was called the three-field system; and related to a farm of 300 acres—100 acres wheat, 100 acres oats, and 100 acres green crop. Under the present system, 100 acres of wheat producing 450 quarters would be worth 51s. a quarter—

In all	...	...	...	...	£1,147 10 0
100 acres of oats would produce	800	quarters at 20s. 5d. a			
quarter	...	...	...	...	816 13 4
					£1,064 3 4

Which would be the value of wheat and oats together, under the present system. But under free trade the value would be—

450 quarters wheat, 35s.	...	£787 10 0
800 quarters oats, 14s.	...	660 0 0
		£1,347 10 0
Suppose the rent of the land to be 2l. an acre, which was higher than usual, it would amount to		600 0 0
		£1,047 10 0

So that suppose the farmer paid no rent under a free-trade system, that calculation would show that he would still be a loser by 15l. when compared to present prices. He had several other statements of the same kind, but he would not trouble the House with them. In case an objection should be made to that which he had stated, as being based on the three-field system, he would take one on the six-field system. The farm was one of 300 acres of clay land, and the rent 30s. an acre. A hundred acres of wheat would produce 400 quarters, which, at the present average, 55s. 6d. a quarter, would yield 1,110l. With the value of the barley and beans, the amount which would be received under the present system of Corn Laws was 1,841l. 5s., while under a free-trade system it would only be 1,316l., leaving a difference of 525l. As the rent was only 450l., it followed that the farmer, even if he paid no rent—which he did not suppose the free traders intended—would be a loser to the amount of 75l. He was sorry to trouble the House with these statements. He had endeavoured to prove to the House that the repeal of the Corn Laws would be against all the principles of policy and of justice. But he would go further, and say that, if it was right and necessary—if the time had come for a repeal of the Corn Laws, they could not have a permanent and satisfactory settlement of the measure proposed by the present Government. In order to prove what he asserted, he would refer to some

remarks in the *Quarterly Review* of September, 1842, written almost immediately after the Tariff measures of the right hon. Baronet were introduced. He was justified in saying that the present could not be considered as a permanent settlement of the question, because the right hon. Baronet had come into power, and had received the support of the agricultural party, for the purpose of maintaining the Corn Laws. The article to which he referred was written in the defence of the right hon. Member. Referring to the speech of the right hon. Member in May, 1840, it stated that he repeated early in the Session of 1841, and again more fully in the debate on the Address on the 28th of August, 1841—on which occasion the vote was taken which decided the fate of the Whig Ministry, and placed the right hon. Gentleman in power—his opinion on the Corn Law question, and stated the grounds on which alone he could accept the confidence of Parliament in these words:—

“ Previous to the late dissolution of Parliament I said, and I now repeat it, that I think the sliding scale a preferable method of settling the duty. I then said that I could not pledge myself to the details of the existing law; but that I would reserve to myself an unfettered power of considering and amending these details. I hold the same language now: I still prefer the principle of a graduated duty; but if you ask me whether I will bind myself to maintain the existing Corn Law in all its details, and whether that is the condition upon which the landed interest give me their support, I say that, upon that condition, I will not accept their support.”

That was in 1841; and he thought it was evident that the right hon. Baronet had accepted their support on the condition that he should maintain a Corn Law, though not the details of that which then existed; and that remarkable declaration, the reviewer states, was enforced by many illustrative details, and was followed by that celebrated division, in which 352 Conservatives, including Sir R. Vyvyan himself, accepted the right hon. Baronet's conditions, and called him, by the unexpected majority of 91, to execute as Minister *inter alia* the amendment of the Corn Laws, to which he had so emphatically alluded. Need we, or indeed could we, add any argument to give strength to this statement and this fact, that Sir R. Peel declared boldly, almost arrogantly, the conditions on which alone he could accept the support of his party? Those conditions were accepted, and support was given to him with the most unexampled enthusiasm. Such were the reviewer's remarks; and, for him-

self, he could only say that, seeing that the right hon. Baronet had now proposed a repeal of the Corn Laws, that the measure was not to come into operation till 1849, and that a dissolution of Parliament must occur before that time, he could not see what chance there was of expecting that the proposed repeal of the Corn Law would be a permanent and satisfactory settlement. They had been told that they ought to have discovered the intention of the Government at an earlier period, and they had been told that Earl Grey had discovered it. But were they, the conscientious and unsuspecting supporters of the right hon. Baronet, to be compared to Earl Grey, the determined but honest opponent of the Government? He would now turn to those 112 Members who had supported the right hon. Baronet in the proposed change. He presumed there was a point at which they were determined to cry, “hold, enough,” and to say they had gone far enough. Let them remember they might soon arrive at that point, and that their remonstrances might be met by the right hon. Baronet, turning round upon them and saying, “You should have discovered this sooner.” He had no wish to taunt them; but if they supported the Government in consequence of their confidence in it, and not on account of their belief in the justice of its measures, he beseeched them to remember the facts he had stated, and to act as their consciences dictated. They had been told that it was unwise and unworthy of the aristocracy and the landed interest longer to maintain those laws. He did not understand that assertion. Either the Corn Laws were right or they were wrong. They had supported and did support them, because they believed them to be right. He did not deny that their interests might be concerned in the maintenance of the Corn Laws; but he denied that they could injure one class without injuring another. Those who would suffer in the first instance would be the poorer tenants and the labourers. That was his belief; and he thought he had the authority of the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government for saying, that the repeal would cause much suffering among men who had not skill or capital. The right hon. Baronet seemed to think that the aristocracy, the landed interest, and those who had capital and skill, would not suffer at all; but his belief was that they also would suffer. They could not injure the root of

the tree without injuring the branches. He had yet to learn that they were not to defend the rights of a class, because in defending them they might be defending their own rights also. The aristocracy and the landed interest would be unworthy the compliment paid to them the other night by the right hon. Baronet if they feared any such taunt. But even if the right hon. Baronet should be right in his opinion that the aristocracy and the landed interest would not be injured, what a poor recompense that would be for the loss of the yeomanry of England—

“And you, good yeomen,
Whose limbs were made in England, show you
here

The mettle of your pasturage; let us swear
That you were worth your breeding, which I doubt
not,

For there are none of you so base and mean
That hath not noble lustre in your eyes.
I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,
Straining upon a start. The game's afoot;
Follow your spirits.”

Among whom he would class the noble
Lord the Member for Lynn.

“And with this charge,
Cry ‘God for the Queen, England, and St.
George.’”

He could not believe that the present measure would pass the Legislature; but if it did, he hoped their anticipations of its evil effects would prove incorrect, and that the anticipations of the right hon. Baronet, however vague and uncertain they were, might be verified. The right hon. Baronet had said, that he would not consent to remain at the helm unless that helm were allowed to traverse freely. He feared, if the right hon. Baronet should succeed in altering the course of the vessel, from the praiseworthy motive of desiring to reach, in a more direct manner, the port of plenty and prosperity, he would meet the fate of many a mariner—be driven by storms and tides he little dreamt of, and leave his vessel a helpless wreck on the barren and inhospitable shores of free trade. If such should unfortunately be the case, he had no doubt the noble Lord the Member for Lynn and his crew would come forward and do what they could to get the vessel off, and he only hoped they would not be too late. He thanked the House for the indulgence they had shown him, and begged to conclude by moving that the Bill be read a third time that day six months.

MR. MILNES GASKELL said, he rose to second the Amendment, though it was no small disadvantage to follow the admir-

able speech which had just been made by the noble Lord (the Marquess of Granby). He felt, however, that the obligation to perform this duty was one from which he could not honourably shrink; and in his (Mr. Gaskell's) opinion, it was imperative upon those who were unconvinced by the arguments which had been addressed to them, to state fairly and frankly before the House, and before the country, the grounds upon which their opinions remained unchanged. If he had come to a different conclusion upon this subject since the proposition of the Government had been first brought forward, he would have called upon his constituents either to record a change of opinion upon their own part, or to select some other Gentleman better qualified to represent them than himself—he would not have taken advantage of the privilege which they had conferred upon him for the purpose of promoting measures which he had been returned to that House to combat. He knew it had been said by very high authorities, by the noble Lord the Member for London, and by others, that this was a doctrine not recognised by the Constitution, and subversive of the legitimate functions of Members of that House. Now, he (Mr. Gaskell) was one of the last men to assert a principle tending to impair or limit them. He differed even from his noble Friend the Member for Newark (Lord J. Manners) in the opinion that the Parliament of 1714 had not been justified by a great State necessity in the passing of the Septennial Act; but surely there was a broad and intelligible distinction between the legislative competency of Parliament, and the equitable right possessed by its Members to break engagements which they had themselves voluntarily made. He could conceive no course more likely to weaken their just authority than that of acting in disregard of such engagements on great national questions. The present measure had been ostensibly introduced on account of the failure of the potato crop in Ireland. He apprehended that, without the aid of some such pressure, it could hardly have been expected that a majority of that House would assent to it, and still less that those Members of the Cabinet who had resigned their offices would so easily be induced to resume them. He doubted whether the extent of the potato failure was so great as had been stated; but admitting, for the sake of argument, that it was so, he saw no grounds for the assumption which had been made so largely

in these debates, that if the Government had once opened the ports, it would have been impossible again to close them. That might have been legitimately tested; and he (Mr. Gaskell) must say that it would have been more creditable to the House of Commons, and more satisfactory to the country, if the sense of the people had been constitutionally ascertained. Four years only had elapsed since the enactment of the existing Corn Law. There had been a prevailing impression at that time—an impression to which the language of Her Majesty's Ministers gave additional weight—that that settlement would not be lightly disturbed; and it was difficult to understand how the experience of the last three years—years of prosperity and abundance—of good harvests and high wages—could justify the Legislature in upsetting it. He had heard nothing in the course of these debates to shake his opinion upon this subject. It still appeared to him that a law which in time of low prices protected the producer, and which in time of high prices protected the consumer, was neither impolitic nor unjust: he still believed that the free importation of foreign corn into this country would have the effect of checking the cultivation of the soil, and of throwing out of employment a large proportion of the agricultural population. It had been impressed upon their minds by Her Majesty's Ministers, in former years, that it was not so much the property of the landlord or tenant farmer that was at stake, as the daily subsistence of the great body of the people. They had been told that, with the price of labour at present paid in this country, it would be impossible for the farmer to cultivate his land, and that, consequently, a large portion of it must go untilld. They had been told that the price of labour was so low in the north of Europe, that there could not be an unrestricted importation of corn from the Baltic without a serious injury to the home grower; that the foreign grower would be the party who would reap the greatest benefit from the change; and that, instead of its increasing the demand in foreign countries for our manufactures, it would leave more capital at their disposal for the improvement of their own. The noble Lord who had just sat down had most truly said that they were constantly met by two arguments upon this question, which were utterly inconsistent with one another. When it was sought to enlist the passions of the operative, it was said,

this is an odious monopoly—a bread tax—the landlords are intercepting the supply of food to the people; but when it was the agriculturist who was to be persuaded that his apprehensions were delusive, he was told there would be no serious diminution in the price of corn; and the calculations of Mr. Wolryche Whitmore and Mr. M'Culloch were referred to in support of that assertion. It was the opinion, he believed, of those gentlemen, that corn could not be permanently introduced into this country at a less amount than 52s. or 53s. a quarter. If this were so, what became of the charges of inhumanity that were so largely dealt in? On the other hand, if you could introduce corn into this country at a much lower rate, and if by the reduction in the number of farmers and agricultural labourers, the competition for manufacturing labour became increased, then surely the price of labour must fall, and great hardship must accrue to the agricultural population. He owned, also, that in his opinion it would be most unwise to place this country in a position of dependence on foreign nations for its supplies of food. He knew it was the fashion to deride such apprehensions now; and men were branded as destitute of common sense, if they held the opinions of Mr. Canning and Mr. Huskisson on commercial questions; but he (Mr. Gaskell) could not forget that in 1842 the right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government had expressed his opinion that this risk would be imminent; and he was at a loss to understand how the experience of the last three years could have proved an argument to be fallacious, which was based upon great national considerations. They had been told, too, by Her Majesty's Government, in former Sessions, that the withdrawal of protection would be tantamount to a great social revolution; they had been warned in pathetic language by the Secretary of State against the severance of old times, and the breaking of old associations. They had been told that this was a struggle to amass wealth and power, not to feed the people; that the subscription of immense sums of money to political associations was not consistent with the allegation of manufacturing decay; they had been told that this was an aggressive movement against the occupiers of land; that its object was to give an ascendancy to the inhabitants of towns over the rural population. They were told by the same parties now, that the maintenance of the Corn Laws was no longer possible; and

that those with whom he acted were embarked in a hopeless and unavailing struggle. He (Mr. Gaskell) would give no opinion upon this point; he knew that a powerful combination of parties had declared against the continuance of these laws. He knew that a section of the party opposite—of which he wished to speak with all the respect due to its able and consistent advocacy of this measure—had required a predominating influence in that House. He knew, also, that the leaders of what had once been a great party had appropriated and adopted the arguments which they had so long resisted. The measure, under their auspices, might be successful. If its triumph should be completed, either in that or in a future Parliament, he trusted that it might be followed by all the benefits which the Gentlemen opposite had so long predicted, and not by the evils and the dangers which they (the protectionists) could not help anticipating. But be the result of that triumph what it might, they would at least have the satisfaction of reflecting that it had not been the experience of a small or doubtful good which they had preferred to speculative advantages; but a system under which it was universally admitted that this country had risen to the highest pitch of fame, of prosperity, and of power—that they had thought an adherence to fixed and settled principles was not a thing to be lightly regarded in the government of a great people—and that conceding one day what you had described as mischievous the day before, was a sure means to alienate from public men the confidence and good opinion of their fellow citizens. Lastly, they would be consoled by the reflection that at a time of great difficulty and trial, when party attachments had been broken up, they had refused to separate the maintenance of public engagements from the furtherance of the public good, and had neither abandoned nor betrayed the interests committed to their care.

MR. SHERIDAN rose with great reluctance to bring before the House a matter of a somewhat private and personal nature; but, at the same time, intimately connected with the subject then under discussion. It would be in the recollection of the House that on Friday last the noble Lord the Secretary for Ireland, in reply to the senior Member for Dorsetshire, suggested to him that he would be more properly occupied in comparing the condition of the agricultural labourers of Dorsetshire with that of

the Irish peasantry. With all due submission, and without intending any disrespect, he (Mr. Sheridan) must say that this was sound and wholesome advice; and he trusted that the hon. Member for Dorsetshire, as well as his Colleagues, would take it into their consideration. The hon. Member for Dorsetshire (Mr. Floyer), in reply to the noble Lord the Secretary for Ireland, stated, that so far as regarded his own neighbourhood around the county town of Dorsetshire, and in other parts of the county, the statements of the noble Lord, founded on what he (Mr. Sheridan) had stated, were directly at variance with truth. Now, that was a strong expression; but, at the same time, he felt confident, from his knowledge of the character of that hon. Gentleman, that he would not so far forget what was due to him as a personal friend as to say anything offensive. He would not attempt, nor would it be congenial to the House, nor in good taste, to attempt to controvert that assertion by one of an opposite character. He would not go upon his own responsibility at all; but he would produce to the House, and for the satisfaction of the hon. Gentleman, statements made by gentlemen connected with the county, clergymen of the Established Church, men whose names were well known, and who were familiar with the condition of the poor. Last Friday he had addressed letters to several gentlemen on this subject, and he had received replies, which he would read to the House. The first was from the Rev. Mr. Scott, brother of the hon. Member for Roxburghshire:—

“Maiden Newton, Dorchester, May 10, 1846.

“My dear Sheridan,—You ask for an answer by return of post, and therefore I write; but three full duties, besides Sunday school, give me so little time that I shall only say two words, and write again to-morrow. I certainly do not understand Floyer saying that he never knew wages so low as 7s. per week, for I have known many such instances, and his means of information are much more extended; and if you have got below the mark in stating 7s. as the average rate of money wages, I am convinced that you are only 6d. under the usual terms, for at this moment I know several instances of able-bodied and good labourers having received barely 7s. 6d. per week, without any other advantages, during the whole of the last winter, i. e. from Christmas up to this time. Some occasionally get a day or two task-work, which they consider a great advantage. I have no time for more to-day; but you are perfectly at liberty to use my name for all I have said.—Yours ever faithfully,

“WILLIAM H. SCOTT.”

The next document was from the Rev. Sydney Godolphin Osborne:—

"May 11, 1846.

"My dear Sheridan,—I have read with much astonishment the speech of Mr. Floyer. I enclose for your perusal a statistical return of the wages, &c., in this, the Blandford Union. It was made for me three years ago—I believe it to be true of the present year—at the time I happened to be chairman of the board. I tested its truth myself, and am ready to defend it anywhere. I will give you, in confidence, the name of the individual who took it for me, which will, I think, be a sufficient guarantee for its correctness. I have no hesitation in saying it gives the most favourable view possible of the case of the labourers in the Blandford Union. In the year in which it was taken, 1843, between a seventh and eighth of the whole population of the union were paupers; and it will not be denied that a very large sum was then and is now collected in the shape of private rate, which does not appear in any tangible public shape. The Blandford Union has two districts. In the first, you will observe the wages vary from 8s. to 9s., except in Stourpaine and Crawford, where they are returned, in the former at 7s., the latter from 7s. to 8s. In the No. 2 district you will find seven or eight parishes returned at 7s. wages. Pray pay attention to the observations in red ink; they are those of a well-informed man. I have paid a great deal of attention to the subject, and I have no hesitation in saying that, taking males of 21 years of age to be men, the average pay of the union—the best, I believe, in the county—does not average 8s., including carters. I believe our board of guardians to be as humane and liberal as any in the kingdom—the guardians chiefly substantial yeomen. I have heard again and again relief granted, on grounds admitted to be evasive of the Poor Law Commissioners' order, to able-bodied men, because their wages were only 7s. or 8s. a week, and they had a large family. The usual course is to put it to the account of a sick child; for instance, a few weeks ago I saw relief in the shape of six loaves, and, I think, 6d., given to an able-bodied man on account of a sick child. I turned to the medical officer's book, and found it was an infant of ten months with mesenteric disease! The relieving officer at once admitted that this was only an excuse, as the man's family was so large he could not live on his wages. As to the food of the poor, its staple is potatoes, some get a little pig meat; their bread made from grist. I am ready to corroborate your statement of the iniquity of the grist system. I send you, for your private information, the name of two individuals who ought to know, if anybody ought, the truth on this matter; they have both assured me that the corn sold to the labourers as grist, at sums varying from 6s. to 7s. a bushel, was, much of it, unfit for human food; none of it would have fetched 3s. a bushel in the market. If I mistake not, I can furnish you with some samples, which you may lay on the table of the House. Do not be humbugged about piece-work; it is always so arranged, that the men working hours which would make up a week of eight days do not earn 1s. 6d. a day, very seldom 16d. My opinion of the condition of the Dorsetshire labourers is simply this—that owing to custom and combination they are, with the exception of a few favoured districts, brought to the lowest possible state of existence, physical and moral. If they ever were worse off than they are now, I can only say that the owning and occupying ancestry of the county

deserve a reproach on their memory more bitter than I am to-day inclined to write. My earnest wish is, that a Commission, with power to examine on oath, should be granted by the Crown to investigate their condition; before that Commission we will easily prove the Soper case to be only one of 10,000. I will only now add my poor thanks to you, and the expression of my own determination to leave no step unturned to force the public to look into the state of the poor in these counties.—Yours, in haste,
"S. G. OSBORNE."

The hon. Member (Mr. Floyer) further stated that he actually knew no case in which wages were so low as 7s. per week. Now, he (Mr. Sheridan) took the trouble to write to the relieving officer of Dorsetshire on this subject; and Mr. Burt's letter was as follows. But before he read it, he begged to say that it did seem strange that a gentleman so highly respected, and so well known as the chairman of the board of guardians, should come forward and assert in his place in Parliament that he did not know a single case in Dorsetshire where wages were so low as 7s. per week, when day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, he had affixed his name to the relief and application book in which the cases appeared where relief was given on the ground of such low wages. Mr. Burt's letter was dated May 10, 1846. He says—

"In compliance with your request I have sent you a list of all the able-bodied labourers who have received or applied for relief through my books during the two winter quarters. I believe the average rate of wages in my district not to exceed in money from 7s. to 7s. 6d. a week, and I think the extract I have sent you fully bears me out in that opinion. I cannot recollect the names at present, at least to speak with certainty, but I know there are numbers of labourers working for from 7s. to 8s. per week, and paying their own house-rent."

He had also asked Mr. Burt a question which he likewise wished to ask the hon. Member (Mr. Floyer)—whether he could cite a case in the county of Dorset where a man was paid by the day more than 8s. per week. Mr. Burt said—

"I find I have not answered your question, 'If I know of an instance of a labourer working by the day earning more than 8s. per week?' I believe I can very safely say I do not, neither do I believe there is a single instance in my district."

So much for the hon. Member's assertion that he did not know a case in the county of Dorset where a labourer received so little as 7s. per week. But to make his case still more clear, he would read extracts from the document which had been sent him by the relieving overseer, showing the names of those who were in receipt of 7s. per week. He would not read the

names of those who received more than 7*s.*, because the question turned upon the statement whether there were labourers receiving so low as 7*s.* per week. The document was entitled—

"Extract from the relieving officer's book of applications in the district of Maiden Newton, Dorchester Union, of applications from able-bodied labourers for relief, either from insufficiency of earnings, or illness of themselves or families, in the quarters ending December, 1845, and March, 1846, with the amount of their earnings."

The first case was that of David Legg, Ann Legg, his wife, and two children, residing at Charminster; they received 8*s.* a week, and paid 2*s.* 6*d.* per week for house rent.

"This application was on account of insufficiency of earnings." "William Dare, Mary his wife, and five children, from Vanechurch, wages 8*s.* per week; pays 1*s.* 6*d.* house-rent. This man's earnings have not averaged this winter more than 7*s.* per week. The relief was given by the relieving officer, on finding the family in a state of destitution." "Richard Legg, Mary his wife, and five children, from Vanechurch, wages 7*s.* per week, house-rent 1*s.* 3*d.*" "Elijah Wheller, Elizabeth his wife, and four children, from Vanechurch, wages 7*s.* per week, house-rent 1*s.* 3*d.*" "Luko Bridle, Mary his wife, and three children, from Vanechurch, wages 7*s.* per week, house-rent 1*s.* 6*d.*" "Reuben Wells, Elizabeth his wife, and two children, from Maiden Newton, wages 7*s.* per week, house-rent, 1*s.*" "Job Smith, Charlotte his wife, and three children, from Maiden Newton, wages 7*s.* 6*d.*, and a house, fuel, and potato ground. This man applied for medical attendance when his wife was confined, which was refused by the board of guardians; a midwife attended her, and she died in childbirth."

He begged the attention of the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State to this last case, which ought to be investigated. (The hon. Member having quoted six other cases of a similar kind, continued): He held in his hand a statement which showed the amount of wages and the general position of the labourer in the parishes in the Blandford Union. They were as follows:—

"In Almer—Population, 184; houses, 38; permanent paupers, 8, special cases, 9; wages, 8*s.*; houses, rent free; potato ground of occupiers, free; carriage of fuel, free; women and boys, generally employed. In Anderson—Population, 43; houses, 12; paupers, *nil*; wages, 7*s.*; carriage of fuel; potato land of occupiers, free; house-rent, free. In Charlton—Population, 3297; houses, 90; permanent paupers, 18, special cases, 19; wages, 8*s.*; house-rent, high; fuel, scarce and dear; potato land of occupier, at 6*d.* per perch. In Milton—Population, 731; houses, 133; permanent paupers, 31, special cases, 27; wages, 7*s.* and 8*s.*; house-rent, low; allotments, at 1*d.* per perch; fuel, moderate. In Milbourn—Population, 577; houses, 118; permanent paupers, 30, special cases, 19; wages, 7*s.* to 8*s.*; house-rent, 1*s.* 6*d.* to 2*s.*; allotments from owners; potato ground—men, 15 perches, free for occupiers; boys, 5 perches, ditto; em-

ploy for women and boys. In Milton Abbas—Population, 845; houses, 113; permanent paupers, 18; special cases, 36; wages, 7*s.*, 8*s.*, and 9*s.*; house-rent, 5*s.* per room per annum; allotments from owners, 40 perches at 1*d.*; fuel easily obtained, and cheap; women and boys generally employed; many labourers work in woods, and at piece-work. In Spetisbury—Population, 654; houses, 135; permanent paupers, 19, special cases, 22; wages, 7*s.* to 8*s.*; house-rent, 1*s.* to 1*s.* 6*d.*; allotments from the owner; boys and women generally employed; fuel, at moderate price. In Clenston—Population, 99; houses, 17; permanent paupers, 7, special cases, 2; wages, 8*s.*; house-rent free, and carriage of fuel; good allotments from owner; women and boys employed. In Houghton—Population, 305; houses, 55; permanent paupers, 17; special cases, 9; wages, 8*s.*; house-rent, 1*s.*; allotments from owner; employ for women and boys, allowed to cut fuel on the common. In Kingston—Population, 569; houses, 144; permanent paupers, 26, special cases, 23; wages, 7*s.* to 8*s.*; house-rent, high; allotments from owner, good; constant labourers, potato ground, free; fuel, scarce and dear. In Stickleland—Population, 383; houses, 81; permanent paupers, 26, special cases, 16; wages, 7*s.* to 8*s.*; house-rent, from 1*d.* to 3*d.*; good allotments from owner; boys employed; fuel moderate. In Tomson—Population, 48; houses, 8; permanent paupers, *nil*; house and gardens, free; wages, 7*s.*; potato ground of occupier, free. In Whitechurch—Population, 543; houses, 108; permanent paupers, 15; special cases, 3; wages, 8*s.*; house-rent, low; good allotments from owner; boys and women employed; fuel reasonable. In Zelston—Population, 223; houses, 48; permanent paupers, 10, special cases, 3; wages—single men, 6*s.* married men, 7*s.*; house-rent, high. In Turnwood—Population, 89; houses, 15; no paupers; wages, 8*s.*; potato ground of occupier, free; and many other advantages."

Now, he really thought his hon. Friend had scarcely done him justice when, in the face of these facts, his hon. Friend had declared the statement which he had made was not in accordance with the truth of the case. His hon. Friend had, however, gone further, and maintained that there never had been a time when the labouring population of Dorsetshire were so well off as at present. It appeared, however, that in the union to which he referred, the number of paupers last year was 120, while the number now was 148. This, surely, was no proof that the labouring population were better off. His hon. Friend, however, had gone still further, and stated that, although in some spot in the county the wages might be as low as they had been stated to be, yet that he believed the fact might be accounted for by some peculiar circumstance—as, for instance, that the labourer was not thoroughly up to his work. Why, how, in the name of Heaven, could a man be up to his work upon horse-

beans and turnip-tops, with residences ill-drained and over-crowded, and generative of disease? He maintained that, on the contrary, the wages of the labourer were scandalously low and insufficient to maintain himself and his family. Those were not his mere assertions: they were corroborated by the clergy and gentry of the county. They were repeated also by Lord Ashley at the meeting at Sturminster; and he believed that the noble Lord lost his seat for the county in consequence of the declaration he there made. The prudence of the hon. Member in not following in the noble Lord's footsteps was to be admired; but the hon. Member certainly had not done justice either to his constituents or to the subject. He was well aware of the odium he should incur by the course he was taking, but he disregarded it; and as long as he had the acknowledgments he had received from the clergy and the gentry of the county, that he was really doing good, so long would he continue to agitate this question. He would have been content here to sit down, and to say no more; but he well knew that his hon. Friends on that side of the House, and the Members of the League, would ask him how, with these opinions, he could oppose this measure for the repeal of the Corn Laws? He had yet to learn, however, that the withdrawal of all protection would improve the condition of the labourer. It was still argued that the price of labour depended on the price of corn; though he would have thought that the right hon. Baronet had set that question for ever at rest. On the other hand, he had heard it asserted by Mr. Farquharson, whom his hon. Friend well knew to be a gentleman possessing great influence in the county of Dorset, and of great practical experience in agriculture, that, long as he had been a farmer, which was for a period of twenty or thirty years, he had never known wages to vary in Dorsetshire, whether wheat was 20*l.* a load, or 10*l.* He firmly believed that wages in Dorsetshire were fixed, by custom, combination, and the tyrannical use of the New Poor Law; and he was confident, as long as that law was administered in the way it was at present, so long would the labourer remain in the same degraded and suffering condition. He would produce a case to prove what he said. It very frequently happened (and he was proud to be able to say it) that the labouring poor came to him for advice when they were persecuted under this law.

Amongst the cases brought before him was the following. It was in February, 1846, and was stated thus:—

“ William Rendall, living at Nettlecombe, in the parish of Poorstock.—He has a wife and seven children. His earnings per week are 7*s.*; the eldest boy, 15 years of age, is working for Mr. Roper at 2*s.* per week; and the fourth child, a boy, earns 1*s.* per week. The youngest child is only two years old. The wife nets a little; so do two of the children. Their united earnings amount to 10*s.* per week. Out of this they are compelled to pay 4*l.* per annum for house-rent, to purchase fuel, and are not allowed potato ground. The relieving officer of the Beaminster Union has been applied to for an order of the house in consequence of William Rendall's earnings not being sufficient to support his family, but he refuses to grant the order, saying that William Rendall is an able-bodied man, and telling him to do as he could.”

The answer of the relieving officer when applied to about the case was as follows:—

“ Respecting the case of Rendall, belonging to the parish of Poorstock, I beg to inform you I brought it before our board. His application was refused by the guardians, he having an opportunity of bettering himself, which he refused to avail himself of, because he did not think proper to take any situation out of his own parish. I have no doubt in his present situation the parish will assist him with a little bread for a short time.”

Now, here was a case where the guardians thought the wages not enough, and relieved a little, but for a short time only. What was the alternative? Why, that the labourer was obliged to go back and take these scandalously low wages, which were a disgrace to the country. It would, however, be argued by the economists that the price of labour depended in a great measure on the demand, and that the surplus of the agricultural districts would be drawn off to the manufacturing. He admitted that free trade might cause an increased demand; but that demand would be confined to the manufacturing districts—it would not reach the rural districts in the south. Therefore, he contended, the agricultural labourer would not be benefited by that increased demand. If proof were wanted, he apprehended it was to be found in the fact that, at a time when trade was flourishing, and the demand for labour was greater than it had been in former years, and even when two railroads were in course of construction in the district, there had been no increase in the wages of the agricultural labourer in Dorsetshire. Wages, now that wheat was from 56*s.* to 60*s.* a quarter, were no higher than last year, when it was 47*s.* a quarter. He would not, however, further trespass on the House on

the general question; and he begged to thank them for the attention they had afforded him.

MR. FLOYER thanked the hon. Member for Shaftesbury for the courtesy he had shown, and he trusted he had too high a sense of admiration of his hon. Friend's object, to question for a moment his veracity or his truth. When he entered the House on Friday night he had no intention of trespassing on the indulgence of the House; but when he heard the statements put forth by the noble Lord the Secretary for Ireland, he did think some wrong impression would go forth to the world as to the condition of the poor in Dorsetshire. No doubt that noble Lord was referring to the authority of the hon. Member's letter, but he stated that wages in the county of Dorset were generally 7*s.* a week, out of which the labourers had to pay their own rent. His own experience led him to believe that the impression would be an unfair and an unjust one; and, therefore, he rose and appealed to the House; and he asked them whether that would not be the impression upon their minds? He believed in his own neighbourhood the lowest rate of wages in common was 5*s.* a week, a house free, a garden, some fuel, and some potato ground. He thought it was not unfair to consider, therefore, the common rate of wages to be 9*s.* a week. He also stated, and he believed he was right in stating, that in his own neighbourhood, and in other parts of Dorsetshire, if the wages were put at 7*s.* it would be unjust towards the employers of labour. In confirmation of his statement he might appeal to his hon. Friend's own letter, in which he referred to a case brought before the board of guardians the last day he had the honour of meeting the hon. Gentleman there. That case was the following:—The person who made the application was a poor man, with wages of 7*s.* 6*d.* per week. He applied for relief, but the board decided that they would not give it, because his rate of payment was below the usual rate of wages in the neighbourhood, and, therefore, if they did, that they would be giving the employers the opportunity of getting labour at a less rate than they were entitled to do. They would be saving their own pockets at the expense of the ratepayers of the county. If 7*s.* per week had been the usual rate of wages, would the board of guardians have given him an order for admission? It was not the custom for them to give orders to those

who received the common rate of wages in the county; and that was stated at the board of guardians, and acted upon for that reason. There might be instances in the overseers' book where labourers had but 7*s.* a week; but this was the exception proving the rule, for those labourers who had but 7*s.* a week would not have applied for parochial aid if their wages were not lower than their neighbours'. He had stated on a previous occasion that he believed the labourers in Dorsetshire were as well off at present as they had been for some years. He now reiterated that statement. He did not hold a farm in his own hands, but he had some labourers engaged who earned by measure work at from 10*s.* to 11*s.* a week; and even at this rate of wages, such was the demand for labour, that many of the labourers had quitted the district. There was at present more demand for labour in that part of the country, than there had been for many years at the same season. As regarded the state of the poor-house, he did not think it necessary to enter at any great length, as it formed no criterion of the state of wages. The greater part of the inmates of the workhouse in his locality consisted of aged persons, and of single women with illegitimate children. There were not more than four or five able-bodied labourers in it. As respected the condition of the potato crop in Dorsetshire, he might add, that potatoes were now selling in Dorchester market at from 7*s.* to 8*s.* a bushel. His labourers had assured him that their stock of potatoes had by no means deteriorated, or in any way become diseased since they were stored up. He did not mean to say that the condition of the Dorsetshire labourer was as good as it might be; but what he would say was, that it was much better than had been represented. He did not mean to give any opinion as to the propriety of the custom of paying the labourer partly in money and partly in provisions; but it prevailed to a very considerable extent in Dorsetshire, and advantage was taken of the system to make out a case against the farmers and landlords of that county. The lowness of the rate of wages had been complained of in and out of that House; but it had not been stated that when the money rate of remuneration was low, there were other kinds of remuneration, such as a bushel of wheat every fortnight, which ought to be taken into calculation. He could not see

how the proposed measure could in any way ameliorate the condition of the labourer. It might as well be said, that supposing a town on the Continent, at present exclusively supplied with our manufactures, we would benefit the manufacturers who supplied it by sending into that town the same kind of goods at a cheaper rate from another quarter. How could it be, if we imported foreign corn largely, that we would not displace a quantity from our own soil. The principal question that was discussed was, to what extent the people of this country could consume corn. This question had been fully entered upon by his noble Friend the Member for Lynn, who had proved irrefragably that the present law was quite compatible with an abundant supply of food. In the course of the past year, when there was a bad season in foreign countries, when, in fact, foreign Governments had thought fit to close the ports against exportation, yet, notwithstanding that, we had in bond at present 1,500,000 quarters of corn, which, probably, before the end of the year would be increased to 2,000,000. If this was the case during a year such as the past, what must it be in the generality of years when foreign countries, from abundant harvests, were able to export largely? The hon. Member concluded by expressing a hope that he had satisfied the hon. Member for Shaftesbury and the House in the explanations he had made, and by declaring, that however inadequate to the task, he could not patiently sit by and hear such exaggerated statements respecting the condition of the labourers in his native county, without endeavouring to set the House and the country aright on the subject.

SIR J. EASTHOPE: So far as the wretchedness and misery of the Dorsetshire labourers were allowed to affect the question before the House, he thought they had no longer any ground for debate or controversy. They had had a somewhat angry contest as to whether the Dorsetshire labourers earned 7s., or 7s. 6d., or 8s. a week; and they had been gravely told by the representative for the county, that for the life of him he could not find out how the importation of foreign corn, and the consequent reduction of the price in this country, could work any benefit to those poor creatures. He must humbly but earnestly entreat those luminaries from Dorsetshire to put the question to the poor beings themselves, with whose condition they affected to be so familiar; and if the poor

creatures had life enough in them to answer it, he would stake his existence that they would never reply that it made no difference to them whether corn was 5s. or 7s. a bushel. It was really much too like trifling to say, that it made no difference to a working man with a wife and four or five children, whether the price of his corn was low or high. This assertion was doubly ludicrous when made by those who boasted that they wished for protection to the land, chiefly, if not solely, for the sake of the labouring poor. The way this topic had been handled in that debate, would, he hoped, at all events, save the House from its introduction into their discussions in future. He could very truly say, with the hon. Gentleman who had spoken last, that he had not intended to take up the time of the House during this debate, which was, he hoped, now drawing to a close; but he must take that opportunity of expressing, on behalf of working men, who, though not so badly off as the Dorsetshire labourers, were far from being in a prosperous condition—he meant the population of the large manufacturing town which he represented—the deep sense of obligation which they felt to the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) for the introduction of this measure; a measure which would, in his opinion, confer the greatest benefit on the country at the present time, and the advantageous effects of which would be felt for ages to come. No words he could employ could adequately express the gratitude felt by his constituents to the Government for this great and comprehensive measure. Sure he was that those Gentlemen who exhibited such sensitiveness as to the condition of the labourers, contending that they would be worse off on account of this measure, would soon discover their mistake, and find that the labouring poor had no sympathy with their opinions. The poor knew too well that they became poorer and poorer as corn rose in price. It was nothing less than an insult to their common sense and understanding to tell the people it was of no consequence to them whether corn was cheap or dear, when the farmers' friends, on their own showing, proved that the agricultural labourers could not earn more than 6s., 7s., or 8s. a week in the years of great comparative prosperity. He should not attempt to debate this question. It had been already worn threadbare. The feeling of the country was that it had been already fully discussed, and that the sooner it was

finally settled the better. He could not conclude without again thanking the Government for the bold and manly front they had assumed with respect to it.

Mr. MILES said, that after the able speeches of his noble Friend, and of his hon. Friend who moved and seconded the Amendment, he must express his surprise that no Member of the Treasury benches had yet thought fit to reply to them. He was not so surprised at the three last speeches remaining unanswered; as, had it not been for a misunderstanding relative to the wages of the Dorsetshire labourers, they might not have been favoured with them; and those hon. Members did not enter at any length upon the subject of the night. But he must again express his wonder that no Member of the Government had replied to the speeches of his noble Friend, and of his hon. Friend; not only because of the excellent matter with which those speeches abounded, but on account of the position of the speakers, who left the Government on a point of principle. Before entering upon the subject, he would premise by saying once more, that this was not the selfish case of the landlord, but of the tenant and of the labourer. He thought that as regarded this aspect of the measure—namely, as it affected the tenant and the labourer, something remained to be said, and he would endeavour to fill up the void, and thoroughly to enter into the subject as a farmer would. He would undertake to prove—and he challenged confutation—that the measure would not only injuriously affect the landlords, but much more the tenant, and still more than all the labourers. He would studiously avoid touching on the home trade, and would confine himself as much as possible to the purely agricultural part of the subject, and the interests which the measure would peculiarly affect, in case it became the law of the land. His observations would be first directed to the law of 1828; next, to the present law; and, lastly, to the state of things when corn would be freely imported. He thought it would be necessary to set forth the quantum of protection enjoyed at present, in order to show the improbability of a British cultivator being able to cope with the foreigner under a system of perfectly free trade. He would, in viewing the third period to which he had adverted, namely, a perfect system of free trade, make no account of the three intermediate years during which it was proposed there should

be a diminished protection, but simply take the year 1849, when a perfectly free trade in corn might be supposed to exist. By the spirit and words of the Act of 1842, a fair and moderate protection was meant to be given to the British agriculturists. He need not say that his hon. Friends cordially concurred with the right hon. Baronet in passing that law, because whilst it did away with a very high nominal duty, useless to the farmers, and harassing to the manufacturers and the great body of the consumers, it also corrected the averages, and gave a check to gambling and improper speculation. It afforded to the farmer a fair, moderate protection, to which he was justly entitled whilst the disparity between taxation here and taxation elsewhere existed, and whilst there was so great a difference in the wages of labour here and on the Continent. He regretted that the Report of the Committee of the other House to inquire into the Burdens on Land, which had been moved for, was not then before them; for, as far as he could understand, it would prove that the landed interests were subjected to burdens of a peculiar and onerous nature; and he was led to think it went even further to show that if they abolished the Corn Laws, the rest of the community would be placed in very perilous circumstances. But he would not refer to that, and he would merely go into the case of the English as compared with the foreign agriculturists. He took it for granted that the spirit of the sliding scale, which they were now about to abolish, went to this point, that whilst it gave to the English farmer almost a monopoly of the home market when prices were low, it afforded to the consumer, when prices rose, a gradual supply of foreign corn, the duty being easily paid by the foreign merchant when the grain became necessary to the home consumer. Thus the consumer was relieved from all apprehension of scarcity, and the farmer was secured a proper remuneration for his produce. It had been said that during the present year the sliding scale refused to slide, and that that was one of the reasons which, together with the potato disease, had determined the Government at once and for ever to abolish the present law. That proposition, however, was not supported by arguments or by facts. He admitted that the price of corn the growth of 1844 and the growth of 1845 was very different. But then it was necessary to consider the difference of seasons: that of 1844 was a year of extra-

ordinary abundance ; the harvest was particularly good, and the corn had been housed in admirable condition. In 1845, the harvest weather was precarious, and the corn was generally put away in a damp condition. But was not, he might almost call it, the inestimable advantage of protection conspicuous by its effects in these years? For so well was the matter regulated, that there remained at the harvest of 1845 four months' supply of 1844 untouched. There was, he admitted, great variation in the quality of the wheat of the two harvests. That which sold for 48s. in 1844, had undoubtedly produced this year from 70s. to 72s. a quarter. He had himself sold wheat the growth of 1844, weighing 66 lbs. a bushel, and such as was fully equal to the finest Dantzic, to the milling trade for mixing. Under every circumstance they still found that under this system they obtained every thing they wanted in their own country; and he defied any person to say that the quality of the bread in London was bad. They had at least for two or three months this year very little of foreign corn brought in for consumption. There was, however, a very large quantity stored up, ready to be brought into the market when the 4s. duty would come into operation. The law of 1842, compared with that of 1828, was better, both for the consumer and the producer. But what had it done for the revenue? Because upon such a question as this it was highly necessary, in the state of the public revenues of the country, not only to consider that if in the years 1849 or 1850 they were determined upon abolishing indirect, and on adopting a system of direct taxation, they should look with an eye of jealousy upon the repeal of any law that gave so good a revenue, and at the same time secured a remunerative price to the farmer for his produce. He found, by the law of 1828 there were 13,626,315 quarters of wheat imported, which paid an average duty of 5s. 3d., and the average price of which for fourteen years was 58s. The revenue collected under that Act was 3,576,907*l.* for a period of thirteen years. Dividing, then, that amount by thirteen, they would have the revenue, under the law of 1828, 255,493*l.* per annum. Under the law of 1842 there had been no less than 4,576,000 quarters introduced into this country, at the average duty of 7s. 4d. He found the average price of it to be 46s., so that it was introduced into this country, inclusive of duty, at a sum of 53s. 4d.

By a Parliamentary Paper he found that the duties received under that law amounted, per annum, to 690,368*l.*, so that they had here a lower price to the consumer, which under the law of 1828, was 58s. per quarter, and under the law of 1846, 53s. 6d., and a greater revenue to the State, being 255,493*l.* at the former period, while 690,368*l.* was received as annual revenue under the law of 1842. Therefore he thought, from the short sketch which he had given, he had proved that the law of 1842, as compared with that of 1828, while it gave a fair and moderate protection to the farmer, was better for the consumer, as it gave him bread at a lower price, while at the same time it added considerably to the revenue of the country. All he had to say farther with regard to it was, that he wished they would let well alone. They had a law which was not only a good revenue law, but which was also good for the consumer, and with which at the same time the producer was perfectly satisfied. It would now be necessary for him to refer to that part of the subject which went to a total reduction of duty in the year 1849; and to do this it would be necessary for him to show what the prices of corn were likely to be with a system of free trade existing in this country. Her Majesty's Ministers had declined to prophesy on this question—notwithstanding the information which they must have—which was indeed open to any individual who would take the trouble to examine it. For his part he would not go into the old hackneyed sources of returns from Hamburg or Dantzic—he would take the statistics of the world, because it must be remembered it was from the world at large that we were to be supplied. Not from Europe alone, but from America, Asia, and Africa, England was to draw her supplies; and in looking to these he would direct the attention of the House to those two great sources from which, on a former occasion, he stated his opinion that this country would derive her chief supplies—Russia and America; and he was happy to say, that since the period when he had last addressed the House on this subject, he had had the most extraordinary confirmations of his opinion from those parts of Germany which were most contiguous to this country, and which now had the first chance, when corn was dear, of throwing wheat into our markets; but they expressed their fears that, by the adoption

of the system of free trade, Russia would, in all probability, have the advantage over them, while it was well known that Russia herself looked to America as likely to supersede her in the supply of our markets. This he gave on the authority of letters received on the one side, and from communications of the highest possible authority received on the other; and seeing this, he thought it was necessary to establish what would be the probable price of wheat in this country under a perfectly free trade in corn, before he described its effects upon the farmers of this country. His noble Friend (the Marquess of Granby) had already given the receipts of two farms, and showed what he thought would be the loss to them under free trade; his noble Friend referred to farms under the three course and the six course system. He would refer to farms under the four and five course system, so that he thought between them the House would have every system of agriculture which was adopted in this country; and though in the calculations adopted by the noble Lord, he placed the price of wheat lower than he was disposed to estimate it, yet they came both nearly to the same conclusion, which was, that supposing they totally destroyed agricultural protection, even if the rent of land was entirely given up, it would not be a compensation to the farmer for the protection which he had lost. Now, then, let the House see quite clear—at any rate let the public be quite clear as to the influence of rent on the price of bread. He knew there were hon. Members who maintained that cheapness was the prime element in the question, and who argued—as an hon. Baronet had already argued—would not the poor be benefited if their bread could be materially reduced; quite forgetting, at the same time, how much wages would be lowered in that case; but let it be clearly understood how much rent enters as an ingredient into the price of a quartern loaf. The average rent of land in England is 19s. 11d. He took it at 20s. an acre; and would go into Lincolnshire, where the farmers farmed very high—where there were thousands of farms he knew, which, letting at 20s. per acre, produced four quarters of wheat to the acre. He was speaking of wheat cultivation under the four course system. Well, then, one quarter of wheat produced 500 lbs. of bread; and taking the quartern loaf at 7d., if hon. Members referred to their arithmetic, they would find that the element of rent raised the price of the quartern loaf by the large sum of one halfpenny. That was his statement. He would be glad to be shown where it was wrong; he had tried many experiments in regard to it, and he believed his statements would be fully borne out. Well, so much for the rent of land, as bearing upon the quartern loaf, and he hoped, at any rate, that this point would now be considered to be settled, and that the public would now know from his estimate, as well as the estimate of those who had a thorough knowledge of the milling trade, that that was the precise sum by which rent raised the price of the quartern loaf. Now, let him go back to those statements, by which he had endeavoured to gain a knowledge of the probable price of wheat when imported into this country. And, first of all, he would take the prices of wheat at Odessa, in 1845, the spring prices of wheat, from February to June, and also the price of freight for that year. In February the price of good Odessa wheat, weighing from 60 lbs. to 61 lbs. per bushel, was 16s. to 17s. per quarter; and the freight was 7s. 9d., making in all 24s. 9d. The next return was dated the 14th of June, in the same year, by which he found that wheat had risen to 20s. and 21s. per quarter—the freight remaining the same—so that there they had, during four or five months only, a rise in the Odessa market from 24s. 9d. to 28s. 9d. He found likewise—and he mentioned this to show how the prices of wheat corresponded at different foreign ports—he found, that in the months of March and April the prices of wheat at Stettin and Rostock were 25s. and 26s. per quarter, the freight being from 3s. to 4s. per quarter, amounting to 30s. in all. This was previous to the very general feeling that was afterwards entertained that the harvest would be deficient. The price certainly rose afterwards, and rose considerably; but it never was above 34s. per quarter. He did not know whether his hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead were present, who had sat as Chairman of the Bonded Corn Committee, and with whom he had had much pleasure in acting; but that hon. Member would recollect some curious evidence that was given before the Committee. Among others, Mr. G. Freyn stated, that the price of Egyptian wheat, taking one year with another, was 36s. per quarter. Mr. Philip Taylor, who explained the bonded system of France, stated in his evidence

that three-fourths of all the foreign wheat imported into Marseilles came from the Black Sea, and that he had imported into Marseilles from the Black Sea wheat at the price of 26s. 8d. per quarter. It was however in his power, from different statistical returns, to give the prices of wheat at Odessa for the last ten years; and he had brought it down to the latest period he possibly could, from 1834 to 1843. The returns contained the highest and the lowest prices obtained in each of these years. He had taken a medium; he had afterwards taken the several averages of the whole of these years, and he found that the general average was 24s. 10d., the freight being 7s. 9d., making in all 32s. 7d. But a curious fact had come out of these statistics, which was, that the difference of price in Odessa was greater proportionally than the difference of price in England; and that the year of the highest price in Odessa was not the year of the highest price in England; and without troubling the House with details, he would state that he found that the highest price in England during these ten years was in 1839, when it was 70s. 8d., while the year of the highest price in Odessa was in 1840, when it was 27s. 8d. But let the House look at this—let them look at what was the average price at Odessa during these ten years, and what, during the same period, was the average price in England. The average price in this country was 63s. 10d. with a fraction, while, for the same period at Odessa, it was 26s. 0½d. He would ask, then, how the House could possibly suppose that cultivation would be supported, when such ruinous competition was to be encountered? The next quotation of prices he would give would be those from America; and he would own at once that, on some occasions, they were high, and on others very low; but then it would be in the recollection of the House that America did not grow wheat for exportation—that they only sent their surplus wheat into this country. He would take a work which had been put into his hand the other day, written by the well-known Mr. Ellsworth, the Commissioner of Patents, and this pamphlet he would recommend every one to read. He took up the question of freight and of price, and in every possible view of the subject he showed that America would be able to compete with Russia. But there was one of his statements so extraordinary, that he would bring it before the notice

of the House; and it might be as well to state that it related to the harvest of 1842, which was remarkably good, while that of 1845 was more so. He proposed to take wheat from the State of Illinois via New Orleans to Liverpool; and he calculated the price of it in American currency, which, when reduced to English prices, would give 29s. 2d. per quarter delivered at Liverpool. But it was further to be recollected that there could be no doubt whatever, the greater portion of their supply from America would not come in bulk, but in the shape of flour in barrels; so that it would be injurious not only to the agriculturist, but to the millers also. But he had more evidence on this subject, which, as it came from a practical man, he could not help alluding to. He did not observe the noble Lord the Secretary for Ireland in his place; but, at the late election for Nottinghamshire, his noble Friend had been asked to fix the price of wheat under the new system; and though his Colleagues had refused to do so in this House, yet his noble Friend, in that assemblage of farmers, and in the presence of a gentleman who had been engaged in the foreign corn trade for the last forty years, had fixed the price at 48s. The gentleman to whom he had alluded, Mr. Barrow, it seemed, had spoken before the noble Lord, and therefore could not reply to him; but he had published a letter upon the subject afterwards, and in that letter he had published the most sporting thing which he had ever heard come from an old corn-importer. He said—

“I will contract to deliver in London, within three years after the opening of the ports of England to foreign grain free of duty, 50,000 quarters of wheat, weighing at least 61 lbs. per bushel, at 40s. per quarter. If that wheat should cost me, as I expect, only 32s. per quarter, I shall gain 20,000*l*. If wheat should still realize 48s., as the noble Lord would lead you to expect, the noble Lord or his friend would gain the same amount. My stake in this country (worth about 50,000 quarters of wheat at foreign prices) is ready to be pledged against any security of equal amount, for the fulfilment of my part of the contract.”

Now, allowing that the operation of this law would have a tendency to equalize prices, he should be disposed to fix the average price of corn, under a perfectly free system of importation, at 40s. per quarter; and upon this calculation, he would show to the House what were the receipts of farms under the present prices, and what the receipts would be under a perfectly free trade in corn. He would not go to low cultivated farms, he would

take a farm in Nottinghamshire, near Newark, and another in the richest part of Lincolnshire, in the neighbourhood of the Fens. First of all he would take the Nottinghamshire farm, which was a farm of 400 acres, and under the four course system. The rent was 1*l.* per acre, and it was cultivated 100 acres wheat, 100 acres barley, 100 acres turnips, and 100 acres clover. But he neither took into account the turnips nor the clover, because he gave them credit for the sheep fed on them, and therefore he took into account the sales of sheep. He found, then, that 100 acres of wheat, at three quarters four bushels an acre, which sold at 52*s.* per quarter, produced 965*l.* 100 acres of barley at four quarters four bushels per acre, sold at 32*s.* per quarter, produced 670*l.* 400 hoggets and ewes, bred on the farm, sold in the wool at 36*s.* each, produced 720*l.*—in all 2,355*l.* Now, look at what the receipts would be under a system of the free-trade prices; which he had endeavoured to establish, because he took it as a matter of course that barley and oats, as well as sheep, would both fall in equal proportions to wheat. Supposing, then, the produce to be the same, 100 acres of wheat at 40*s.* a quarter would give 700*l.*; 100 acres of barley, at 25*s.* a quarter, would give 562*l.* 10*s.*; and 400 hoggets and ewes, at 28*s.*, would give 560*l.*—in all 1,822*l.* 10*s.* This would be a loss to the farmer, under the free-trade system, if he was not wrong in his calculations, of 532*l.* 10*s.* Of course all depended upon their accuracy. It was only a question of calculation; but he had shown the documents on which he relied, and therefore he hoped and trusted that those hon. Gentlemen who differed from him, would show the documents on which they rested for coming to a contrary conclusion. He said, then, that under the free-trade system the receipts of the farmer would be reduced a little above one-fifth; and he found that, even suppose the landlord were liberally to reduce his rent one-fourth, that is 100*l.*, still the loss which would remain to the tenant, to be divided between the profits of capital and the wages of labour, would be 432*l.* 10*s.*, or a reduction of 1*l.* 1*s.* 10*d.* per acre. So much for the Nottingham farm. He would now come to the farm in Lincolnshire, which was cultivated according to the five course system. The rent of this farm was 2*l.* per acre, and its extent was 200 acres. The course of husbandry consisted of turnips, oats, wheat, beans, and wheat.

The turnips were not valued; forty acres of oats, at ten quarters per acre, at 21*s.* per acre, produced 420*l.*; forty acres of wheat, at five quarters per acre, at 52*s.* per quarter, produced 520*l.*; forty acres of beans, at six quarters per acre, at 33*s.* per quarter, produced 395*l.*; and forty acres of wheat again, at five quarters per acre, at 52*s.*, produced again 520*l.*—in all 1,855*l.* Now, what would the result be under the free-trade system? Supposing the land to produce the same quantity: forty acres of oats, at 16*s.* per quarter, would give 320*l.*; forty acres of wheat, at 40*s.* per quarter, would give 400*l.*; forty acres of beans, at 28*s.* per quarter, would give 336*l.*; and wheat again would give 400*l.*—in all 1,456*l.* So that 399*l.* would be lost to the farmer under the free-trade system. But, again, deduct one-fourth of the rent, and they would find that the loss to the farmer would be 299*l.*, or 1*l.* 10*s.* per acre. Now, all he could say was, that from these calculations, based as they were upon the present prices, and on the prices contemplated under free trade, he had endeavoured to show the House on what data he had formed his opinions; and it would be for those hon. Members opposite, who professed a perfect knowledge of the question, to show how, under a system of free trade, it was possible that the cultivation of the poorer soils should be carried on; as it was acknowledged on all hands that the lower the quality of the land, and the less price that was paid in rent in England, the greater was the amount of outlay in the farmer's capital and in labour. Now, he asked, if under the system of protection cultivation such as he had described had gone on—if under a system of protection cultivation had ascended from the valleys to the tops of the hills—whether, by this law which they were now asked to enact, it would not immediately retrograde in its course, and place the farmer in such a pecuniary situation as that he would be utterly unable to continue his present cultivation. If they considered that a farmer's capital was 1,000*l.* upon every two hundred acres, they would find that they were playing with two hundred and fifty millions of capital; and, therefore, it was a question they ought well to consider; and, considering it, he trusted they would reject this measure, which was so inimical to the interests both of the farmers and labourers. They had been told to improve—and he was sick of the statements made, particularly at Christmas, by gentlemen who attended farmers'

meetings, and who knew nothing whatever of farming—their cry was, “Cultivate, cultivate, cultivate; farming is yet in its infancy, and by greater exertions you will reap increased produce.” Now, the importation of guano had been referred to by one hon. Friend of his; and that was, of itself, sufficient to show, that with the moderate prices which had existed from 1842 down to the present time, the farmers had been induced to cultivate, not only with that manure, which was very costly in price, but also with bones, and with every kind of artificial manures; so that it was plain the farmers were willing to apply their capital in every fair mode of cultivation. Now, in order to show that England reaped the benefit of this increased cultivation, he held in his hand a paper which he thought would prove the immense increase of production of late years; he alluded to the number of coombs of wheat sold in Norwich market for the last thirty-seven years—from 1805 to 1843. He would not trouble the House with reading the returns year by year; but he found that, in 1805, there were 50,844 coombs sold, when the price of wheat was 92s. per quarter; in 1810, 55,521, wheat being 100s.; in 1811, 61,122 coombs, the price being 82s.; in 1812, 54,560 coombs, the price being 120s.; in 1839, 174,176 coombs, the price being 64s.; in 1840, 207,274 coombs, the price being 63s.; in 1841, 201,750 coombs, the price being 60s.; in 1842, 235,620 coombs, the price being 52s.; in 1843, 241,644 coombs, the price being 48s.; so that the produce had nearly quintupled, while the price had been reduced one-half; but then he must remind the House, that during this interval a great deal of land had been enclosed; and he was proud to say that there had been a continually increased application of labour to the soil. He held in his hand a statement of the average price paid for labour per acre, in periods of five years, in the same county, from 1785 to 1840. This return gave, from 1785 to 1790, 7s. 2d. per acre; to 1795, 8s. 2d.; to 1800, 11s.; to 1805, 15s. 6d.; to 1810, 19s. 6d.; to 1815, 14. 2s. 4d.; to 1820, 11. 3s. 9d.; to 1825, 11. 1s.; to 1830, 11. 6s.; to 1835, 11. 3s. 2d.; to 1840, 11. 6s. 7d.; so that the amount of labour, estimated by the price paid for it per acre, had nearly quadrupled. He knew these would be considered as dry details; but he wanted the question to be thoroughly understood by the country; and though at the

risk of detaining the House, he wished to show the data, however erroneous they might be considered, on which he had founded his conclusions. But then they were told of the wages of labour in Dorsetshire. He was living in the west of England, and he lamented to say that wages there were too low; but at the same time, if they went to a district of the country which was purely agricultural, which had not formerly rested upon manufacturing industry, now lost by the progress which the north had made, injuring the ancient clothing and silk districts—if they went to a purely agricultural district, that never had been manufacturing, they would find that the price of labour, he would not say kept pace with the price of wheat *pari passu*, yet, more or less, the price of wheat had an effect on the price of labour. In reference to this part of the subject, he held in his hand a return from a person of the name of Healy, who had been a farmer for fifty years in Lincolnshire, who had sent him a return of the average prices obtained for his wheat at septennial periods, and the sum of money he paid for labour during the same periods, which gave the following results:—From 1817 to 1823, the average price of wheat was 31. 8s. 5d., the average rate of labour 13s. 5d.; from 1824 to 1830, wheat was 31. 5s., labour 12s.; from 1830 to 1837, wheat was 21. 9s., labour 10s. 3d.; from 1837 to 1844, wheat was 31. 2s. 6d., labour 12s. 8d.: thus showing that wages had risen and had fallen with the price of wheat to the extent of 3s. 2d. per week. That view was confirmed by an account from Norfolk, which proved that wages had been as high as 15s., with wheat at a high price, and as low as 9s. when wheat was at a low figure. He had been induced to show this state of things in confirmation of what his noble Friend had stated—namely, that although in some counties the wages of labour did not follow the prices of wheat, yet in the purely agricultural counties they certainly did. He was greatly desirous of showing the expense of cultivation in England as compared to that of other nations; this, however, he found himself unable to accomplish; but as he spoke in the earlier part of his address of the amount of taxation levied from the British farmer, he would follow out his observations by showing, that a great difference existed between the farmers of this country and America in this respect, and prove that although corn might be made cheaper in England, and that the prices of other commodities might be made

less, yet that the position of the farmer and the labourer of the United States and England could not be placed under similar advantages. He would take the State of Ohio, and he would give the average rate of taxation per head. Two sorts of taxation were to be considered—the taxation of the State and the general taxation. The result appeared to be this—that the general taxation was 6*s.* 9*d.* a head, and the State taxation 5*s.* 8*d.* The taxation of this country was much higher; indeed, he thought that the average amount was 1*l.* 17*s.* 9*d.* Look also at the difference in the amount of rent. The cost of some descriptions of land in America was not more than 5*s.* an acre, which, if considered in the light of thirty years' purchase, would give the annual rental not more than 2*d.* The rent of land in England was as high as 20*s.* per acre. Add to that the great tithes, 5*s.* per acre, and the small tithes 1*s.* 6*d.*, and the amount of other burdens, and the cost of land in this country would not be much less than 1*l.* 11*s.* per acre—a difference, really, of 1*l.* 10*s.* 10*d.* between England and America. It was quite plain, therefore, that this country could not enter into competition with America. He had wearied the House, he feared, when referring to Russia on a former occasion; but he could not avoid on the present occasion quoting a slight portion of the statistics of that country. From these figures it would be seen that much cause for alarm existed. Looking at the returns from the year 1828 to 1835, of the amount of grain consumed, and that left over for the next year, after deducting the necessary amount for seed, it appeared that Russia had an immense surplus. He found the produce which remained in seven years amounted to the extraordinary quantity of 28,000,000 of quarters. [An hon. MEMBER: In the whole of Russia?] Yes; the whole of Russia. The information might be found in *Macgregor's Tables*. The last work he had read upon the subject of the Russian Empire fully entered into the question of her prodigious powers of production, and as the extract was not of a lengthy character, he would read it to the House. The author of *Revelations of Russia* said—

"A prodigious extent of the territories of European Russia is wonderfully fertile. Its produce is such, that there must always be an increasing demand from abroad, and partially of a nature sufficiently various and useful to enable the country to thrive and prosper on it, if driven to consume it at home. Corn, tallow, hemp, hides, wool, and wine—her staple articles—she might easily

produce in tenfold abundance, and so cheap as to undersell all the world."

Thus Russia presented herself to this country; nor could it be denied that the prospect of competition was, as respected her, of a tremendous nature. He need scarcely allude to the United States of America more particularly than he had done. Land in that country was of such extraordinary fertility, that it would continue to produce crops without the application of manure for a century. In the State of Virginia, corn had been raised on land in succession without manure for one hundred years. This would show that this country had much to fear from America. It had been attempted to be shown that this Bill would cause a large increase in the exports of this country to America, and so keep down the increase of manufactures there. If, however, it could be shown that this effect would not follow, then he would say, that the principle of the measure stood indeed upon fallacious ground; for not only would agriculture be destroyed, but also the manufacturers injured to an incalculable extent. On this very point, indeed, what did Mr. Ellsworth say? At page 585 of his book stood this passage:—

"Had the Corn Laws been absolutely repealed in 1825, the establishment of manufactories in the United States might have been procrastinated many years; but no change in those laws can now materially change the course of production in this country, and any alteration made will not be considered as a boon to agricultural nations, but as a measure forced upon the Government by the wants of a population increasing more rapidly than agricultural productions on a limited extent of land, and in an uncertain climate."

So it would be seen at once that no chance of reciprocity existed with America. He had attempted, imperfectly he would admit, to draw the attention of the House to the condition of the landlord, the farmer, and also the labourer; and if hon. Members would only apply the same process of reasoning to this question which had been applied to the Ten Hours Bill, the conclusion would be identical; competition must inevitably attack first the profits of capital, and this must react on the wages of labour. It was stated that the difference would, on the Ten Hours Bill, amount to ten per cent.; but on this question of a free trade in corn came in the competition of a whole world with Great Britain; and no one, on this view, could arrive at any other conclusion than that the profits of farming capital would indeed be lowered, and that the labourer would be more

deeply injured than any other portion of the community. The hon. Member for Oxford had on a previous occasion spoken of the injury that would accrue to the holders of tithes by the operation of the Bill, though he had as yet heard no hon. Member follow out these observations. He would say that this measure would inflict a great injury upon the clerical titheowners, if passed into a law. When the noble Lord on the other side brought forward the Tithe Commutation Act, he conferred a great benefit upon the titheowner. He (Mr. Miles) did not allude to the saving of money alone, but to the improved footing upon which the clergyman was placed with his congregation and tenants. Look at this tithe question for a moment. The Act passed in 1835, and the lowest price of corn for that year was 39s. Had the Government commuted tithes upon the prices of that year, they would have committed a great injustice to the titheowner. They were forced to take an average upon a series of years; and it had been shown by a return which had been moved for by an hon. Member, that only a very small difference of prices had ever arisen in the septennial series of years, not more, he thought, than 1s. per quarter. Seeing that a parish was indebted for much of its charity to the clergyman, it would be as great an injury to the locality, as to the titheowner himself, to reduce the averages one-fifth in amount. There was one topic more on which he desired to say a few words, though he feared he had already trespassed too long on the attention and time of the House. It appeared to him, that if all land available for the purpose had been brought into cultivation, and that all the best modes of cultivation had been adopted—that these failing, a source of supply was still open for trial before the country was thrown defenceless to the competition of the world. In a few words, what had become of the Colonies? What reward had this country returned for the fidelity and resources of the Colonies? What were her engagements with them? In the year 1842 only had an Act been passed, which conferred a kind of free trade on Canada. He had opposed that Bill, and he had done so conscientiously. But though reasons existed against the measure to which he referred—the contiguity of Canada to the United States, for instance—these objections did not exist with respect to Australia. The Austrians had loaded the Table of the House

with petitions praying to be admitted to the same privileges as the Canadians; but they were left with the agriculturists of Canada to the free competition with those nations who only rewarded us for our generosity by meeting relaxation with hostile tariffs. He had referred a few nights since to the feeling existing in the Canadas upon the question of free trade, and he would trouble the House with a short extract of a speech made by Mr. Sherwood, the Solicitor-General, for an indication of that opinion. Mr. Sherwood said—

“He did hope, however, that the commercial class would maturely weigh all the consequences which must result from the substitution of the United States markets for those of the mother country. It would be impossible but that such a change in our commercial relations would very soon bring about a change in all our other relations. Our interests would cease to be identified with the interests of the parent State: our mental associations would assume new forms; our customs, and laws, ay, and our institutions too, would be assimilated to those of the people with whom we cultivated mercantile relations. There was a time, the hon. Gentleman said, when he believed that patriotism had no connexion with self-interest; but he had lived long enough to change his opinions on that subject; and he did think that loyalty had some relation to pecuniary considerations. If, however, by a course of imperial policy, over which the people of Canada can exert no possible control, they are forced into a new sphere of social and political attraction, they are not the culpable party.”

Such was the opinion of the Solicitor-General, given, he believed, at a free-trade meeting at Montreal. It had been stated, that the United States took the manufactures of England in proportions so large above the Colonies of Great Britain that this country must foster the trade with that country. How stood the fact? He would take the two items of printed and plain calicoes. The export of plain calicoes to the United States had only increased in four years 455,928 yards, while of printed and dyed calicoes, the export of 1845, as compared with 1841, had decreased 12,927,430 yards. The export of plain calicoes—mark this—to British America had increased, in four years, 4,655,649 yards, and of printed and dyed calicoes, 2,658,758 yards. This was the official return:—

Plain Calicoes to United States in 1841.....	11,957,053 yds.
Ditto to British America.....	7,757,332
Balance in favour of United States in 1841.....	4,199,721

Calicoes, printed and dyed, to United States in 1841.....	26,025,281 yds.
Ditto to British America.....	10,703,415
Balance in favour of United States	15,321,860
Plain Calicoes to United States in 1845.....	12,412,981
Ditto to British America.....	11,580,586
Balance in favour of United States only	832,395
Printed and dyed Calicoes to the United States in 1845 ...	13,097,851
Ditto to British America	13,362,173

Balance in favour of British America 264,322
In 1845, instead of 15,321,860, against in 1841.

So, to the other advantages held out by Colonies, must be added the capability of taking the manufactures of the mother country. Then take the amount of manufactures absorbed per head in different countries, and mark the importance of the North American Colonies:—Russia took 8d. per head; Prussia, 8½d.; Germany and Switzerland, 2s. 9d.; France, 1s. 7d.; Holland, 31s. 6d.; Belgium, 7s.; Denmark, 2s. 10d.; Sweden and Norway, 1s. 3d.; United States, 7s. 11d.; and the North American Colonies, 37s. 4d. per head. It appeared clear, therefore, that if this country bound her Colonies by the bond of true affection, that they would prove of the greatest benefit to her best interests—that of her trade. Yet it would appear, that a great reliance was placed on foreign countries, though they met England with hostile tariffs. Russia met this country with taxation, and yet the Government of the land was mad enough to attach themselves to a system for the benefit of foreigners, though in doing so they ran the risk of bringing ruin upon the middle classes, and also on the labourers. Then the House had been told of compensation. Oh that that word had not been uttered in the House! He would quote the amount of compensation in the county of Essex, and from that the House could make a calculation with reference to other counties. The following were the returns:—

Medical relief in the county of Essex, years ending March, 1844, 7,871l. 12s. half	£3,935 10 0
Schoolmasters and mistresses. —I can find no returns. Witham Union, 55l. There are 17 known in the county	935 0 0
Auditor for county	350 0 0
Subsistence of prisoners, including bedding, clothing,	

and other expenses incidental on their imprisonment in all the prisons in the county	£3,319 5 8
Expenses of prosecutions—as-sizes, quarter sessions, adjourned sessions, and Central Criminal Court, 4,317l. 10s. 10d. Half of this is now paid out of the Consolidated Fund	2,158 18 5

Total of local taxation proposed to be paid out of the general taxation of the country £10,698 17 1

Calculation showing what relief the proposed payments would afford to the country, or on an acre of land in the county of Essex:—

1st. County rate raises 4,560l. 0s. 1½d., a 2½d. rate would therefore raise 10,422l. 10s., (very nearly the same as the sum above.)

Or take it another way. The number of acres in the county are computed at 980,480; but by the admeasurement of parishes it is more, about 1,000,000.

1,000,000 hence is 4,166l. 13s. 4d.; 2½d. an acre would produce 10,416l. 13s. 4d., as nearly as possible as the sum above. So the compensation proposed is about 2½d. per acre, and on a farm of 100 acres would amount to 17 0s. 19d.

N.B. It ought to be borne in mind that this is not all relief, it is only a shifting of taxation.

The amount of this compensation reached 2½d. per acre! A great deal had been said by the friends of the Government out of doors upon the subject of what reduction or changes would take place in our taxation simultaneously with the reduction in corn. He did not notice the worthy Alderman who represented the borough of Stoke-on-Trent, in his place; but he held in his hand a printed paper, a “free and easy letter,” which he would read to the House. It was addressed to John Ridgway, Esq., and was signed, “W. T. Copeland.” This document commences—

“I have ever been a free trader, but I am opposed to a repeal of the Corn Laws unless accompanied with such a relaxation of our fiscal regulations that we may enjoy free trade in all things. This opens the door to a wide discussion. The limits of a letter will not permit me to state a great deal. But, for example, abolish the Corn Laws; in so doing, put the poor, county, police, and highway rates on the Consolidated Fund; the whole nation to bear the expense. Do away with the law of settlement, which would save all the law expenses, little short of a million sterling, expended in contesting the settlement of the unfortunate pauper, who, having laboured hard in a manufacturing district, and having been located for years, in his old age is sent to his parish, not knowing a soul, but to die in the parish work-house. Reduce the import duties upon our own peculiar manufactures of earthenware, and upon printed cottons, silks, &c. Levy only an import duty, for statistical purposes, on the foregoing and following articles, tea, sugar, &c., and impose a Property Tax and a modified Income Tax; and, this done, I have little doubt but faith can be

kept with the public creditor, and that the entire classes of the people, whether agriculturist or manufacturer, lauded proprietor or operative, will be benefited; but a partial free trade must be conducive to ill, at least in my judgment. My remarks are crude, but I feel confident, ere long, there are parties who will put them into a proper shape, and adopt something very like them."

Now it appeared from this, that though 110 and 114 Members of that House adhered to the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, yet it was clear that some of the friends of the Government had wider notions of taxation to be repealed than others. Who had heard of these reductions except through this letter? But another cry existed, to which he would briefly allude. Many persons had no doubt read a pamphlet written by Messrs. Morton and Trimmer. Of its merits he would say nothing; because, founded on false data, he should not use its arguments. But to show the opinion of free traders themselves upon the change necessary to be made if protection were removed, the pamphlet was of value, and he would read a portion. Messrs. Morton and Trimmer, at page 61, say—

"Let the agriculturists agitate for a total repeal of all duties on malt and hops, whether for revenue or protection, and the reduction of the duties on tobacco and sugar to one-half of their present amount; and there can be little doubt, with the aid of the great mass of consumers of all classes, they will succeed. It cannot be for a moment doubted that the removal of all protection duties, whether colonial or manufacturing, will accompany the discontinuance of protection to agriculture. This the agriculturists have a right to expect."

He had not quoted one word from *Hansard*, upon the recorded sentiments of Members of the Government upon this question of a repeal of the Corn Laws. If hon. Members had turned their backs on old and apparently long cherished opinions, he could not help that. He would not, however, quote their speeches against them. But in the absence of quoting these matters he had fallen upon the words of one who so well expressed the opinions he held, that he should take the liberty of reading them to the House. The passage he should read was published in *Hunt's Magazine*, an American publication. The article was written after the last hostile tariff in 1833. It was as follows;—

"We are in favour of the protective system, because we believe it is calculated to promote the interest of our country, and our whole country. We believe that there is no one question of national policy in which the people have so deep an interest as the one we have been considering.

We are in favour of it, because it will promote the interest of the manufacturers, and save from ruin the 300,000,000 dollars of capital invested in that useful department of human industry. We are in favour of it, because we believe that it is protective of the commercial interests. We are in favour of it, because we regard it as essential to agriculture, that great and paramount interest, which is the foundation of every other. But above all, we are in favour of the protective system, because it promotes the interest of the labourers of the country. This, after all, is the interest which requires the most protection. The rich man can rely upon his money for his support. If the times are hard, his money becomes more valuable, as it will command a better interest, and furnish him more of the comforts and luxuries of life. But to the poor man, the labourer, who has no capital but his ability to toil—to such a one a prostration of business is absolute ruin. Now, as the protective policy is calculated to revive business, and give the labourer the due reward of his toil, we regard it as the poor man's system—as his rightful inheritance."

Such were the sentiments of an American; and he (Mr. Miles) believed this to be the best and truest mode of placing his belief in the soundness of the system to which the pamphlet made reference upon record. Protection was indeed a system adapted to benefit the labourer; and let those who opposed the present measure never forget this. It was for the lower classes—it was for those who had only industry on their side—who had not capital to support them—it was for the labourers of England, that they took up their strong ground, and declared that they would throw what opposition they could in the way of the Bill. He had now done; and, thanking the House for the attention with which they had on all occasions listened to him, he did think that the party with whom he had the honour of acting had held up a good moral lesson to those who might succeed them, because, when deserted by their leaders, they had not flinched from the principles which they had previously maintained. They had shown no self-interest in their advocacy of this cause: they were equally ready to protect the industry of the manufacturing as that of the agricultural labourer, whose cause was now in their hands. Though calumniated, they were still undaunted; though they might perhaps be defeated in that House, they were still unshaken amidst the wreck of principle and party. It had been said that they had delayed this measure: but he thought that was no heavy charge, when so great change was under consideration; when they were about deserting the policy which had been acted upon for years, and were entering into new and theoretical principles; more especially

as that measure was brought forward by one whose talents all admired, but who wanted that political firmness and constancy which were the attributes of every great statesman. He knew that he might be told that in this fleeting world it was difficult to carry out those higher principles; but what were the great difficulties which had caused the right hon. Baronet to turn his back upon his former friends and supporters? Ireland would no longer be thrown in their teeth—for the present distresses of that country they were willing to yield a present remedy; but, recollecting the time when sitting with the 150 men who backed the right hon. Baronet in 1834, and hearing him advocate principles which he then silently admired, and was determined to maintain, he now felt the difference of their deserted position, when the whole argument was thrown upon those who before silently supported it. But it showed that there was a moral force in Englishmen, which spurned to be led into a course of political tergiversation. Whatever might be the result of their struggle in that House, he thanked God that there was another ordeal through which this measure must pass—a tribunal, he believed, unswayed by popular feeling, and unswayed, as yet, by the principles of political economy—which would thoroughly sift the policy on which this measure was founded; and would pause, he thought, before it sanctioned the measure, and at any rate would interpose between the people and that Minister who now held office merely at the will of his former political opponents.

SIR JAMES GRAHAM: The House, Sir, is evidently weary of this protracted debate; so also I believe is the public, and an opportunity of finally—as far as we are concerned—deciding this most important question, which now for nearly three months has been pending here under discussion is generally and anxiously desired; and having already on several previous occasions addressed you on this subject, I am most unwilling needlessly to trespass upon your time and attention. But still more unwilling should I be to appear wanting in respect to the noble Lord and the hon. Members who, in the course of the present evening, have addressed you on the Motion now before the House, and I fear this might be the case did I leave unnoticed many of the statements which they made in speeches of remarkable ability. Sir, my hon. Friend who has just sat down—the hon. Member for Somerset

—has declared that firmness and consistency are great qualities on the part of a Minister; and though he has studiously avoided the use of those strong terms of vituperation in which other hon. Members have not hesitated to indulge, he nevertheless took occasion to censure Her Majesty's Ministers for their tergiversation, as he styles it, upon this most important subject. Now, I will give my hon. Friend the benefit of the admission, that in discussions which took place formerly in this House, there was no one who more warmly advocated the measures for which he contends than did I myself. I will also say, that I am quite as deeply sensible as he can be of the value and advantages of the qualities to which he has alluded; but being charged with responsibility as a servant of the Crown, at a time of public difficulty, and, as I verily believe, of public danger, I was not reluctant to profit by an enlarged experience; nor did I hesitate to give effect to the opinion which I deliberately and maturely formed upon the great question which now awaits our decision. The hon. Member for Somerset has expressed his belief that the measure which has been introduced by Her Majesty's Ministers, whatever may be its issue in this House, will not pass into law, on account of the opposition it is likely to encounter in another place. Sir; I will not venture to indulge in any predictions or in any prophecies as to what may occur elsewhere; but I may be permitted to express my individual views, and to state that my anticipations are very different indeed from those of the hon. Gentleman. It is my conviction, as the result of the discussions which have taken place in Parliament and out of Parliament, that this question is now virtually settled; and I have a very strong opinion that the measure under consideration will in a very short time become the law of the land. Indulging in this anticipation, and having as deeply at heart as any man can possibly have the welfare of the agricultural classes and of the landed interests, I find it impossible to concur with the noble Lord the Member for Lynn in the opinion that either the farmer or the landlord will derive the smallest benefit from protracted discussions on this important question; and if I were called on to say whom the delay which has taken place has most injuriously affected, I should declare that none have suffered by it so much as the farmers and the agricultural classes generally. Remember, there is at

the present moment in bond in this country an accumulated stock of foreign wheat amounting to fifteen hundred thousand quarters. That accumulation has been gradual and progressive. My belief is, that when we assembled in January, the quantity which was then accumulated might have been brought into the market with signal advantage to the consumer, and without the least detriment to the home growers. Four months have since elapsed. The accumulation has, of course, become very much greater in that period. The quantity now on hand is very large indeed. It should be borne in mind, too, that we have already arrived at that period of the year when a new harvest, though not immediately at hand, cannot be said to be very distant: now, if my anticipation should prove correct, and, notwithstanding all this protracted opposition, the present measure should become law, the inevitable effect of your long delay will be a large and—as in time past under the operation of a law which I condemn, and the worst feature in which was the probability it created of such a contingency—a sudden influx on the market of an accumulation long increasing. That influx will be sudden and large; and though I do not apprehend that on the present occasion the operation of that influx will be so injurious to the producer as on former occasions, yet the danger of an influx, and the uneasiness arising from the fear of a possible, though perhaps not a probable, evil, must be all set down as the inevitable consequence of this protracted debate. Before I proceed to touch on other topics having reference to this question, I should wish to notice a few of the points adverted to by the hon. Member for Somerset. That hon. Gentleman declared that the present Corn Law was valuable, and of great advantage as a financial measure. I differ from him entirely, and have ever done so. I admit that I may be fairly charged with inconsistency upon this question of the Corn Laws, in its general bearing; but with reference to my opinion of its operation in a purely financial point of view, I have not changed in the least. I have invariably announced it as my opinion that, regarded as a fiscal measure, the existing Corn Law is not defensible; and I am of the same opinion still. The hon. Member alleges that the producers are satisfied with the existing Corn Law. He has given us, however, no evidence in confirmation of this assertion. I do not think that the

farmers have any reason to be particularly well satisfied with the working of the system; but even though the fact were otherwise, it should be remembered that this is not a measure for the benefit of the producer. I mean it is not a measure for the producer alone. The great body of consumers—the millions—are deeply interested in this matter; and surely it is evident that their welfare ought to be the primary consideration. The hon. Member for Somerset takes credit to himself and his party for having, under present circumstances of great difficulty, maintained their old opinions with great steadfastness and manly purpose. Sir, I admit that on the present occasion they have fought their fight manfully: but I must be excused if I hesitate to accord them all the praise the hon. Member would claim for them. I remember what occurred in this House upon this question during the last three or four Sessions. The strain against this measure was very strong; but until the present Session the cause which they now advocate with such unexampled zeal, though it had the benefit of their votes, had not, unless in very rare cases indeed, the advantage of their eloquence. I will be perfectly frank with the hon. Member. It has been my fortune to argue this question for many years. Yes, and I may boast that I fearlessly at all times declared my sentiments and detailed the results of my experience; but I can with truth aver that, owing to the force of public opinion, I have seen, from time to time, arguments which were urged successfully in favour of protection, some years ago, gradually abandoned one by one as no longer tenable—yes, and surrendered by the very Members who were most zealous in using them. When a debate in former times occurred on this question, arguments used to be urged with reference to landed proprietors exclusively, and their interests in relation to their private fortunes and their political position, which are now by universal assent abandoned—arguments which no hon. Gentleman would venture to urge upon this House now; nay, more, which I do verily believe not even the most enthusiastic amongst the protectionist party, knowing that the public observation is centered upon them, would venture to propound even at the meetings in Old Bond Street. Sir, I am glad that the issue of this question is now narrowed to a point. It cannot be put more clearly, or more explicitly, than it was put on Friday evening last, by

the hon. Member for Shrewsbury. He said with great truth, that the question which awaits our decision is in reality this, whether the contemplated measure is for the interest of the multitude—for the advantage of the people at large. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury used these words:—

"If the measures of the Government have not a tendency to occasion a great displacement of labour, a displacement of that kind of labour which is of the most permanent character—if they have not by that displacement a tendency to occasion great social suffering, and ultimately great political disaster, then, I say, they are good measures; and I for one am not prepared to oppose them."

Nothing can be more just or true than this statement of his case. The question is, indeed, narrowed to this point. What we are to consider, therefore, is not whether the interests of the landlords are maintained by this protection—the question for deliberation, and which awaits our decision, is this—are laws restricting the importation of corn into this country conducive to the happiness, comfort, and welfare of the tillers of the soil—of the multitude? That is the whole question—that is the issue we are to decide on. The hon. Member for Somerset commented on a pamphlet of Messrs. Morton and Trimmer, and made this remark, that the data on which their statements are made not being admitted, the arguments resting on these data were utterly worthless. Now, I beg leave to take advantage of this doctrine in common with the hon. Member. He has gone through a great variety of details concerning farms in Nottingham and Lincolnshire, with a view to justify the inferences he is anxious to draw from data; but I deny his data altogether. He assumes that under the present protective system a steady price of 52s. for corn may be reckoned on; but he forgets that under a more restrictive system than the present, it fell in one year to 39s. Again, he assumes that with free trade 40s. will be the price. On what grounds he ventures to make this assumption, I am sure I am at a loss to conjecture; but, in the absence of all good grounds for his assumption, I must be allowed to apply to his own inferences the doctrines which he applied to those of Messrs. Morton and Trimmer; and not admitting his data, I repudiate his arguments. The hon. Member indulged in prophecy as to the fate of the Bill, and denounced it on arguments which cannot be admitted. But his predictions, and the

result of his reasonings, were not half so fanciful as some of the information which he has recently collected and detailed to the House. He says that in Russia there is every year an accumulation of corn over and above the wants of the people, and available for the purposes of exportation, of 28,000,000 of quarters. Can a more forcible argument be urged in favour of this measure, that year by year there is produced in Russia, over and above the consumption—my hon. Friend was most specific—he said not only beyond consumption, but beyond what was required for seed and consumption, nearly 28,000,000 of quarters available for exportation? That was sufficiently alarming for my hon. Friend; but what was his description of the quantity of land in America? He says that he has read somewhere an account from Virginia where some land was cultivated, year after year, for wheat, without manure, and continued to grow wheat annually for a century. Land, he said, was there cultivated for a century, year after year, for wheat without manure. If those statements be true, if Russia have 28,000,000 quarters of grain ready at all times for exportation, and if in America they grow wheat for a century without manure, every attempt to protect this country by Corn Laws must be worse than useless. No duties that can be imposed would be sufficient to protect our farmers, unless we were to cut off all communication with those countries. Then, Sir, the hon. Member referred to the question of tithes; and he stated that my hon. Friend the Member for the University of Oxford, in his absence, had previously touched upon this particular subject. It is true my hon. Friend did; and as I had the honour of following my hon. Friend, I endeavoured to reply to him. I gave on that point an answer that certainly, to my judgment, is conclusive; and I really am unwilling again to repeat my arguments, though they are short, to the House. So far from thinking that the present change in the law will be injurious to the titheowner, my opinion is, that if there be any injustice done by it, the party to whom it will be injurious is the tithepayer. The number of quarters of grain payable for tithes was fixed at the time of the commutation, and therefore the apprehension entertained by my hon. Friend and the hon. Members around him, that the titheowner will be injured by the land being thrown out of cultivation, is un-

founded; for the titheowner, by the Commutation Act, is guarded against that risk. He is only exposed to danger from the variation in the price. Before the Commutation Act, when the titheowner had his right to draw the tithe in kind, he was then liable to be affected by any variation in the quantity; but now, except there is a variation in the price, his position is permanently secured. He is necessarily bound to submit to any alteration arising from a variation in the price; and so he was formerly, when he drew his tithe in kind; but by this antecedent law he is secured from any alteration arising from a diminution of the quantity, which is the great risk to be incurred. So far, therefore, as relates to the titheowner, it will do him no injustice whatever: it appears to be perfectly clear that he is not exposed by our proposition to the slightest risk. Now, with regard to the Colonies. With reference to what my hon. Friend has stated with respect to Canada, I think that my hon. Friend was an opponent of the proposition of the Government, which placed Canada on the same footing as an integral part of the United Kingdom in respect to importation. If I mistake not also, when my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead (Mr. Hunt) brought forward his Motion last year, that the Colonies generally should be admitted to equal importation with this country, my hon. Friend was found among the opponents of that measure; and I must frankly say, that looking back to the past with reference to all the discussions that took place with respect to the Corn Laws, if I were to mention the discussion in which the necessity for their abolition was sustained by argument more signally triumphant than another, I should refer to that very occasion when my hon. Friend resisted the proposition of the hon. Member for Gateshead. Although I voted with my hon. Friend, his arguments did not appear to me to predominate. There is another topic to which my hon. Friend has referred—he has alluded to the insignificant sum that was offered as compensation to the landed interest on the part of the Government. Now, Sir, I absolutely disclaim, on the part of the Government, that the term “compensation” was ever used. I say, if it be necessary for the public good that this measure shall be carried, it is unworthy—it would be disgraceful, on the part of the Government to propose—it would be still more disgraceful on the part of the landowners to accept—com-

pensation for an act of justice due to the entire people. All that ever was said was this—that, incident to the passing of this measure, other measures would be proposed by Government, which in their judgment would be conducive to the agricultural interest, and consistent with the public good, and which at the same time would alleviate the pressure of the burdens on land. I would now beg leave very shortly to advert to another portion of this extensive subject, I allude to what has been said by various Members with reference to what they call the ease of Ireland. The noble Lord the Member for Lynn, on a former evening, stated that Her Majesty's Government had acted with bad faith—that they gave no information that sustained their own assertions and views—and that they kept back other official information of an opposite character; and the noble Lord stated that the Commander of the Forces in Ireland had given information on the subject at variance with the information we produced. He stated that the Poor Law Commissioners had also given information different from that which he produced; and I think he said also the prison inspectors—I have made every inquiry in the proper quarter. With respect to the information alleged to have come from the Commander of the Forces, I have seen no information from him of the character described by the noble Lord. I inquired in the proper quarter at the Horse Guards, if any such information was received from Sir Edward Blakeney, and I am in a condition to give the most positive contradiction to that assertion of the noble Lord. Now, with respect to the Poor Law Commissioners. In the month of November I thought it right to advise Her Majesty to appoint a Poor Law Commissioner—a superior officer specially delegated to preside over the administration of the Poor Law in Ireland. That appointment took place in the month of November; and since the month of November I have been in constant communication with that superior officer. He is a member of the Searcity Commission, from which weekly returns are made to the Lord Lieutenant. He signs each of those weekly returns, and I have laid on the Table of this House four of his Reports. These reports bring the information up to the latest period, with the exception of two reports since received, which I am ready to produce, and they sustain in the strongest manner the assertions made by Her Majesty's Ministers

with reference to the danger and extent of the scarcity in Ireland. It is possible that the noble Lord may have referred to Mr. Gulson's mission to Ireland. Now, Mr. Gulson was never delegated to make an inquiry on this subject. He left Ireland in the month of November—he visited various workhouses in different parts of Ireland in the months of October and September—he made no visit later than about the beginning of November, and at that time the Commission for inquiring into the disease in the potatoes was not complete. He was ordered to investigate another matter. Any information he received on the subject of the potato disease was not official information; he never has officially communicated on the subject; and he himself left Ireland in November, having visited those workhouses in the months of September and October. With regard to the prison inspectors, I never received any communication with reference to any inquiry they have made; and I am quite ignorant of the information to which the noble Lord referred. I have caused inquiries to be made on the subject, and when I receive an answer to those inquiries, I shall not fail to mention it to the noble Lord and to the House. The noble Lord has said that we represented to the House that the scarcity was universal in Ireland. Now I appeal to the House, and I ask them if that be a correct statement of the information we have given them? I never said that the distress in Ireland was universal; I said it was wide-spread. I said it is scattered throughout various localities, in almost every county in Ireland, and that the difficulty of dealing with it mainly arises from its being so scattered through an infinite number of small districts, and from the intensity of the distress where it prevails. To that statement, Sir, I adhere in the most decided manner. I know not whether the hon. Member for Armagh (Col. Verner) is in his place. I have here a letter signed by the hon. Member himself, dated not very long ago, in which he depicts the distress in his immediate neighbourhood in the most glowing terms. It is an application to Government for pecuniary assistance, to which he has signed his name. It is a letter which certainly does describe the distress in Ireland as of a character deserving the intervention of Government and the aid of Parliament in the shape of a pecuniary grant. This letter is addressed to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and states that the undersigned, being deeply sensible of the

calamity with which Ireland is threatened, by the failure of the potato crop, and considering that in such an emergency it is the duty of every man to do his utmost to avert the frightful evils that might be expected, recommended the outlay of a sum of money in draining Lough Neagh; and the last paragraph is in these terms:—

“That a grant of 33,000*l.* by the Government would be met by 118,000*l.*, raised by the proprietors of the neighbourhood, and others, and that the result would be a mighty improvement to the north of Ireland, and to the health of the district; and that it would afford an opportunity”—let the House mark this—“of employing the labouring population, whose condition it would be frightful to contemplate unless industrial measures of this kind were applied.”

This memorial bears the signatures of the Lord Primate, Dr. Crolly, Lord Charleville, Lord Acheson, and, among other names, that of William Verner, M.P. But, Sir, although the Irish case is a case of decided pressure, the extent of which, from day to day, is more apparent, and forces itself more and more painfully upon our attention, yet I am bound to say that I have never rested my support of this measure upon the Irish case. I have stated that which I am ready to repeat, that the urgency of that case did precipitate the necessity for the reconsideration of the law that regulates the importation of grain; but I frankly avow that from the moment that reconsideration became necessary, views of general policy—views bearing on the general condition of the people of this country, did convince me that the repeal of the existing restrictions had become indispensably necessary. I wish not unnecessarily to trespass upon your attention by repeating the arguments that have brought me to that conclusion. But I wish to refer to something which was said, I think, by the hon. Member for Shrewsbury on a former evening, with reference to the injurious effects which he anticipated from the export of the precious metals, consequent upon a constant and large importation from abroad. Now, Sir, amongst the reasons that lead us to think this change of our policy necessary, is a view the converse of that taken by the hon. Member for Shrewsbury. I agree with him that, considering the present state of our monetary system, a large exportation of the precious metals is inconsistent with the well-being of trade and the interests of the community; but my own belief is that if our ports be open for the steady and uniform importation of

grain from abroad, so far from those exports of the precious metals taking place, except in seasons of unexampled or rare scarcity, so far from its taking place in ordinary years, as under the existing law, it will be prevented by the measure we now propose. The corn taken by this country will, when the trade has become an established trade, be mainly paid for by barter; and the result, I think, will be that trade will be extended, and that the injury which the export of the precious metals, to meet distress suddenly arising from failure of the home production, causes, will be prevented. I shall now, with the permission of the House, state shortly my opinion as to the effects to be apprehended on our foreign trade from this measure. But I cannot separate the question of the home trade from the foreign trade. My opinion is, that the foreign trade and the home trade, in a series of years, will be found to be indissolubly connected. Now the foreign trade can only be maintained by our having the power of consuming the articles taken in exchange for our exports; but a high price of provisions disables the consumer from taking those articles. He cannot go into the home market, consequently the home market is paralysed; and what is the result of that? A stimulus is given for the forced exportation of goods for the foreign market; the foreign market in consequence becomes glutted, the exporter is injured, and the result is, again, diminished power of consumption at home; and thus it is proved, both by reason and by experience, that the foreign trade cannot be injured without the home trade suffering also. Then as to procuring wheat in the foreign market, I conceive wheat is more universally consumed in this country than in any other country in the world; and whatever the price or scarcity is, it is found that the quantity consumed varies less with the price than that of any other article that is consumed in this country. All those who are in easy circumstances, whatever is the price, always consume the same quantity of wheat; and the labouring poor are so much attached to wheat, that they will forego almost all other articles approaching to articles of first necessity, rather than go without wheaten bread. If the quantity of the article purchased be the same after the price is raised, the surplus of money which would be available for the purchase of other articles is exhausted in exactly the same ratio as the price has increased. Suppose when wheat

is raised wages remain the same, while the consumption of the wheat is not varied: the surplus that would remain for the purchase of other articles is affected exactly in the ratio of the rise in the price of wheat. A labourer purchases wheaten bread when it is dear nearly to the amount of his entire wages, and he is then prevented from consuming any other article. The effect on the home market is instantaneous: that affects our foreign trade, by stimulating export of goods, and the disarrangement of our whole system of commerce is the effect of this increase in the price of corn. This brings me to the point which, after all, is the point of primary importance, namely, what is the effect of the present state of the law on the condition and happiness of the nation. Now, Sir, it is said, that although the manufacturing labourer may gain by a prosperous trade and a low price of provisions, that this is not equally applicable to the agricultural labourer. And this is the pith of the whole argument. I admit the great number of the agricultural labourers—I admit the importance—I will not say the paramount, but I will say the great importance—of this class of society; and if you can show, as heretofore I thought you could show, that this portion of the community would be injured by an alteration of the Corn Laws, then the argument against a change would be strong, if not conclusive. But having given the matter mature consideration—it is true the noble Lord the Member for Lynn says I am lapsing into a sexagenarian imbecility—but having given the matter my best consideration, I am bound to state it is not true that the agricultural labourer's condition, with reference to the high price of provisions, is different from that of the manufacturing labourer; their interest is identical, and both the manufacturing labourer and agricultural labourer suffer severely from the high price of provisions. I do not know if my hon. relative the Member for Shaftesbury is in the House. I know the condition of the Dorsetshire labourers has received his attention; his kind and warm heart has been touched by their position; and, knowing this, I am surprised at the conclusion at which he has arrived with respect to the Bill. What does he state? He says that under no circumstances do the labourers of Dorsetshire receive more than 7s. or 7s. 6d. a week; and I understood the hon. Member for Dorsetshire, who followed the hon. Member for Shaftes-

bury, to go further than the hon. Member for Shaftesbury, and to admit that there was a weekly deduction from the wages of one or two shillings for house-rent, making the net wages something between 5s. and 5s. 6d. weekly. My hon. relative stated that in his opinion this rate of wages does not vary with the price of provisions, and if provisions rise in price, the wages do not also rise, so that their condition is hopeless. Now, Sir, I say it is anything but hopeless. Try this experiment—if you cannot raise the rate of wages, you can perhaps reduce the price of wheat. Other interests, I admit, may suffer—possibly the farmer may suffer—possibly the landlord may suffer; but I defy you to demonstrate to me that the condition of the Dorsetshire labourer will be deteriorated by lowering the price of corn. I understood my hon. Friend to say that not only was this their condition at present, but that it had been so for a long period, and that for at least thirty years they had been in this condition. Now we are not debating Magna Charta, or any great principle of the British Constitution, but we are discussing a law which happens to be about coincident with this deterioration in the condition of the Dorsetshire labourers, and which is about thirty years old. And when my hon. relative despairs of procuring any rise of wages in Dorsetshire, let him try the experiment of lowering the price of food. I was about to state that I think that it is quite clear that the effect which would be produced on the manufacturing workmen and the agricultural labourers by a fall in the price of food must be the same. The noble Marquess (the Marquess of Granby) brought under the view of the House the situation of the agricultural labourers in the reign of Elizabeth; but we must look at things as they now exist, and Parliament must deal with them accordingly. This can no longer be regarded as only an agricultural country. I repeat it: if you attempt to legislate for England as purely an agricultural country, you will fail; for this country—be it for weal or woe—is also a great manufacturing country, and you must legislate now with regard to its manufacturing and commercial interests. Therefore you must look to the connexion of manufactures and commerce with agriculture and land, and see how their interests are blended. You cannot have great manufacturing or commercial prosperity without creating a great demand for labour in the neighbouring agri-

cultural districts. At the present time, for instance, you have the Birkenhead docks in progress; you have railways, and other great public works carried on in different places; your manufacturers call for an increased supply of labour; a demand arises in the agricultural districts, and a great number of labourers are attracted from the most remote and rural parts of the country, to those great marts of industry. The effect, then, in the rural districts is, that when manufactures are flourishing, wages rise in all parts, from an extra demand for labour. Now, what is the condition of the labouring classes? Let us be sincere on this point. I appeal with confidence to the reason, and judgment, and candour of hon. Gentlemen below the gangway, and if I establish the fact that even in the agricultural districts the rise of wages is coincident with cheapness of food, and if you wish to legislate for the welfare of the labouring classes, the case can be so easily established, and made so clear, that you cannot resist the passing of this Bill. Wages do depend upon demand and supply, and when a demand for labour operates among the agricultural classes, and raises wages, provisions being plentiful, they obtain the three greatest advantages which a working man can simultaneously enjoy—full employment, high wages, and a low price of provisions. Oscillation again comes; production has been unnaturally stimulated; with a diminished quantity of food the price is enhanced, the ports are closed, the home market is destroyed, the foreign trade is injured, the exportation of the precious metals caused by the sudden demand for corn operates upon prices, and wages fall. What is then the condition of the labouring man, whether engaged in manufactures or agriculture? In the first instance, he enjoys three of the greatest boons that can be conferred on him—full employment, high wages, and a low price of provisions. Now look to the reaction; there is deficient employment, low wages, and a high and artificial price of provisions. I do not wish unnecessarily to prolong this argument; but it has convinced my own mind, and I am satisfied that this effect of low prices and plenty of food in the manufacturing and the agricultural population is invariable, and certain to lead to their comfort and their happiness. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury put the whole case on the effect which the repeal of these laws will have on the labouring classes. Now I am willing to take

the issue on this. I have therefore thought it necessary to show, at length, that for the well-being of the labouring classes, no other course is likely to be so beneficial as to pass this Bill. No sophistry or ingenuity of argument will satisfy the people of this country that they ought to consent to the continuance of a state of things by which the price of food must be raised, and the wages of labour must be reduced. No cajolery will satisfy the people of this country that this kind of legislation is calculated to promote the general interests, however good the intentions and anxious the wishes for the well-being of the labourers of those who urge us to continue the protecting laws. Now, let me shortly glance at the next portion of the subject. Is it the interest of the working farmer that this law should be continued? In the Committee on Agriculture, over which you, Sir, presided in 1836, many witnesses gave evidence on this point. I should be unwilling to detain the House at any length, by referring to much of the testimony then given; but I will merely call the attention of the House to the evidence of two tenant farmers as regards the influence of the Corn Laws on their interests, and they spoke clearly and distinctly on the subject. The witness to whose testimony I shall first call the attention of the House, is that of Mr. Ellis, a large tenant farmer in the neighbourhood of Leicester. The first question put was by my right hon. Friend now Paymaster of the Forces (Mr. B. Baring):—

"It is for the advantage of the farmer to raise prices, is it not?—I do not think so; I am not of that opinion. I do not think it is to the advantage of the farmer to have very high prices.

"What do you consider most advantageous to the farmer?—A steady price; that the farmer when he goes to take land should look to some steady price, and not look to adventitious circumstances to keep him out of a difficulty.

"Do you think the present scale (that was the law of 1828) has had the effect of creating greater fluctuations of price than there would have been under a more reduced scale?—That is a question that I cannot answer, not having been in the corn trade; but I am certain that the Corn Laws have raised delusive hopes in the farmers."

Then the hon. Member for the Tower Hamlets (Sir W. Clay) asked—

"You are decidedly of opinion that steadiness of price is the circumstance most important to the farmer?—My opinion is not in accordance with that of most people with respect to the interest of landlord and tenant. Up to a certain point I hold that they go together; that it is the interest of the tenant to keep the land in good condition, as it is of the landlord that he should do so; but his

landlord's interest is to have a high price to enable him to pay a high rent. I do not think it is the tenant's interest to be clamorous about a high price; it makes very little difference to me whether I pay a high or a low price; and I think the country thrives better all round me, if the price is a moderate one; it is better for me not to have a high price, provided my expenses are in proportion.

"The farmer is a capitalist, and it is of importance to him to be able to calculate the returns upon his capital?—Just so.

"He would do that better, and feel more certainty, if he were sure of a steady price of wheat?—Yes, he would.

"Suppose that the present system, or any system of Corn Laws, tends to produce fluctuations in the price of wheat, that must be ruinous in its consequences to the farmer?—There is no doubt of it."

Then the witness was asked by the hon. Member for Somerset (Mr. Miles)—

"Do you think you could do without protection altogether?—Not in the present state of things. I think we must come to that ultimately; but we must go by easy steps."

These questions were put in 1836; and recollect that in 1842 the protection was reduced one half, and under the present measure there is to be a less duty, which is to endure for three years, and so we shall arrive by easy steps, at what this tenant farmer, in 1836, forewarned you was inevitable, and which he considered desirable. Again, he was asked—

"But you think that the poorer class of farmers at present look at 60s. as the price at which wheat can be maintained?—Yes.

"Is it your opinion that, upon the average of years, prices can attain to that height?—It is my opinion that they cannot, and that they will not attain 60s. with fine seasons.

"And the consequence is, that the poorer farmers have fallacious hopes raised?—Yes."

This was the testimony of an English farmer. I now come to that of a farmer of the Lothians, who I believe is not now living. I had the pleasure of his acquaintance; and I know that he was one of the most successful agriculturists in that district, where so many improvements have been made in agriculture. I allude to Mr. Howden, who was asked by the hon. Member for the North Riding of Yorkshire (Mr. Cayley), whom I see opposite—"If you had been sold off in 1820, do you think you would have been better off than you are now?" Now, observe the answer which Mr. Howden gives, after twenty years of protection. He replied—

"I do not know that mine is a fair case to be taken as a general case, because I started very poor in life; and I have had a hard struggle, and other circumstances that contributed to depress me. I am the only remaining farmer in the parish

where I was brought up. Except myself, there is not a farmer, nor the son of a farmer, remaining within the parish but myself."

This was brought out still more clearly by the next question put by the hon. Member for the North Riding of Yorkshire:—

"What is the reason of their having all gone away?" Mr. Howden replied—"The money rents that were exacted of them; they all conceived that they were to have 80s. a quarter, and their calculations were made upon that: it soon appeared that that could not be realized, and they were not contented, and ruin has been the consequence."

"Then there has been a great change of tenantry in your neighbourhood?—There has been."

"And that has been caused by the fall of prices?—Yes, and the want of accommodation on the part of the proprietors."

"The proprietors have not reduced their rent in proportion?—They now have generally done so; but they were loth in doing it when the circumstances required, and therefore the tenantry fell."

Thus it appears that it was calculated, on the part of both tenant and landlord, that the price of 80s. would be uniformly realized; and that by the first Corn Bill that price would be guaranteed to them. The landlords took tenants on this presumption; and they were disappointed in the result. The landlords thought, under the operation of that Bill they were justified in thinking, in *communibus annis*, this price would be realized. I know that the landlords in that part of the country are generous and highminded men. I have known them from my youth; and I am convinced they would not take an unfair advantage; but they postponed reducing their rents too long. Mr. Howden was next asked—

"In your opinion, did the Corn Law that was made in 1815, deceive both the landlord and the tenant?—It did. I believe that the calculation upon which they took at that time was almost universally 4*l.* a quarter."

"The general impression was, that the Corn Laws then made would have the effect of keeping wheat at the price of 80s., and both landlord and tenant were deceived in that?—Yes."

"If the Corn Law had not the effect of keeping up the price, something must have reduced the price?—It did reduce; but as to the cause, I shall not pretend to say."

"The Corn Law, having promised a price of 80s., failed to perform it?—Yes."

Such is the state of the tenant farmer. I have also shown you what is the effect of these laws on the labourers, and also what is the effect on the tenant in regard to his relations with his landlord, and that whatever amount of protection was promised on any given price of produce guaranteed, the result has been failure and disappointment. This was the inevitable result in every instance. What Mr. How-

den described as the case of the tenants in his district was that of 10,000 others; and this arose not from any want of generosity on the part of the landlord, but from the defect of the law; and I believe that it is as much for the interest of the tenants and the landlords, as for that of the consumer, that there should be steadiness in the price of corn, which would be obtained by the removal of restrictions. I will now take a short glance at the situation of the landlords. But before I do so I must observe—and I hope that I may say it without offence—that it is too much for hon. Gentlemen below the gangway to assume that they only are the landlords of the country, and that they alone represent the landed interest. I confess that I know not where to find a very prosperous landed property in which great improvements have been made in the cultivation, and where the rental has been greatly increased, where the happy result may not be traced, either immediately or indirectly, to its connexion with commerce and trade. This also I believe to be the opinion of a large body of the most influential Members of that class. Now let me try this question in connexion with our manufacturing districts. I will take the county of Lancaster, the seat of the cotton manufactures. Who are the great landed proprietors in that great district? The Earl of Derby may be considered as one of the greatest. What is the opinion of the Earl of Derby on this subject? Is he hostile to the repeal of the Corn Laws? But I may be told that that nobleman's property is in immediate approximation to the manufacturing districts; I will therefore refer to the instance of the Earl of Burlington, whose property is purely agricultural. The Earl of Derby and the Earl of Burlington are not bad instances, and they both are adverse to protection. Again, I will take the case of Lord Francis Egerton, whose property is connected with commerce and agriculture; and the inevitable effect of experience has made him a strenuous advocate for a change in these laws. What is the case in the West Riding of Yorkshire? What is the opinion of one of the largest landed proprietors there—Earl Fitzwilliam? Is he opposed to a repeal of the Corn Laws? Take Scotland: go to the chief seat of the cotton manufactures there. The county most engaged in manufactures is that of Lanark. What is the opinion of the Duke of Hamilton, the chief landed proprietor there? You may treat this argument with contempt if

you please; but it is impossible for you to say that you represent exclusively the agriculture of this country. This is an assumption which the facts will not bear out. The hon. Member for Somersetshire mentioned an extraordinary fact, that the average price of wheat in 1805 was 92s., and that it was now 50s., and that the produce of the country had at the same time increased to supply equal to the wants of a largely increased population. Now, it is a curious fact that, coincident with the commercial and manufacturing prosperity of that period, the rent of the land has risen, and not the rent of the land only, but the fee-simple of the land has increased in value, while, as the hon. Member has shown, the produce of the soil itself has increased. If you pass this measure, no great fall of price may take place below that which we have known for the last three years; but I am satisfied that the great body of the people will obtain this inestimable advantage—that they will have an ample and perfect security against a sudden rise of price to any great height. Now I may take shame to myself, but I am bound to say that, although late, I have arrived at this conclusion after a more careful consideration of this matter, combined with experience; and I say that the real truth of the whole argument, as it appears to me, is summed up in a masterly manner by Lord Grenville, in 1815, and I believe that what he says is undeniable. I cannot persuade myself that the laws which regulate the importation of corn tend to produce plenty, cheapness, or steadiness of price. As far as they operate at all, my belief is, that when carefully examined in practice and tested by experience, they produce the very opposite effects. Lord Grenville lays down the general principle which is the converse of this. Lord Grenville said that monopoly is the parent of dearness, scarcity, and uncertainty. I believe that the proposition is true. I believe that it is impossible to cut off sources of supply, and increase abundance. You cannot cut off a supply from these markets where you can get an article at the cheapest rate, without enhancing the price. To say that the people shall not obtain articles of first necessity unless they are the produce of their own soil, would be, in the words of Lord Grenville, to deprive them of the advantages to be derived from those great arrangements of Providence which could secure them against the failure of crops or varieties

of seasons. I am, therefore, most anxious that this measure which we are now discussing should pass un mutilated and entire; and I have a strong conviction that, if it becomes the law of the land, it will have the effect of protecting the labourer against the high price of articles of the first necessity for his subsistence, whilst it will give security to the farmer in his speculations and his profits; and, more than all, I believe that this measure will be the only means of reconciling the prosperity of the landlords with the interests of the community at large. I believe that it will extend our commerce, that it will increase the prosperity of our manufactures, and place our foreign relations on the surest and most stable foundations of amity. It is my conscientious belief that it will be memorable in our history. [*Cheers.*] Yes, memorable in our history, as securing the prosperity, the peace, the contentment, and the happiness of the great body of the people, without injury to the exclusive interests of any particular class.

MR. CAYLEY, in reply (to Sir James Graham) contended that when Lord Grenville said that monopoly was the parent of scarcity, he did not apply the remark to the present Corn Laws. Lord Grenville's observations applied to the Corn Bill of 1815, which prohibited the importation of wheat until the price rose to 80s. the quarter. The present Corn Law was protective, not prohibitory; it protected the farmer, and thus protected the labourer, who was employed by the farmer; and protected the consumer by securing the cultivation of the land. With regard to the remark which the right hon. Baronet made respecting the hon. Members who sat below the gangway, he must say that he thought it ungenerous. These Gentlemen did not assume to themselves the exclusive representation of the landed interest; on the contrary, it was given to them from every quarter of the House except their own. The right hon. Baronet appeared to attach great importance to the authority of the large landed proprietors who had declared in favour of the Government measure; but it should be recollected that they formed precisely the class least likely to be seriously affected by the intended alteration in the Corn Laws. The small proprietors, the statesmen of Cumberland, the yeomen of the dales of Yorkshire, the men of few acres, would be the greatest sufferers. Low prices for the produce of land would be ruinous to them;

for, as the right hon. Baronet must well recollect, they did not pass unscathed through the terrible period of distress occasioned by the low prices shortly after the return of peace. The idea entertained at the present time by many hon. Gentlemen appeared to be, that only the most skilful farmers were to be allowed to cultivate the land. If, indeed, by a stroke of the legislative wand they could at once convert all the small farmers into men of large capital and the highest order of education, the and might doubtless on the whole be better cultivated. But where were they to find all these pattern farmers? Not in England; for the majority of England were hard-working smock-frock farmers: many of them, or their immediate predecessors, had been labourers, who, by persevering industry, and the accumulation of small savings, had risen into the class of small farmers. The measure before the House would strike at the very existence of this class of men. And yet these men had the same taste for the occupation of land as the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden) professed he would have, and that all manufacturers had, after they had made their fortunes in trade. Why were those men, the Members of this most valuable class, to be denied access to the object of their honourable ambition, and the means only to be left to men like the hon. Member for Stockport to gratify their desires? Did the country owe no debt to the farmers of England, large and small—the latter forming the great majority? Yes; by the indirect acknowledgment even of the head of the Government himself. He had stated, that during the last forty years prices had rather fallen than risen. If this were true, then it was equally true that at no period of our previous history had the population increased so fast; but notwithstanding this enormous increase of population, such had been the growing skill of the farmers of this country, that their increased produce had more than kept pace with the increase of population. If this had been the effect of protective laws, what better evidence could we have of their advantage both to the producer and the consumer? What madness, therefore, would it be to entirely alter a system that had led to such beneficial results! The right hon. Gentleman who spoke last, tells us of various great landowners who are in favour of the repeal of the Corn Laws. But the House should remember that in all changes of this kind, it is not the wealthiest who are doomed to

suffer, but the poorer members of the community—men who can just struggle on under present circumstances; and the class living under these precarious circumstances, is a far larger one than the wealthy class. It is the man of small means who suffers the most under changes of this sort; and yet this measure was introduced under a pretext that it was for the benefit of the poorer classes. And then, with a strange inconsistency, it was stated that corn was not to fall in price. The Government affirmed this. The Whig party also affirmed that corn would not materially fall. They, therefore, in their advocacy of free trade, could not pretend to be advocating the cause of the poor. If, however, the repeal of the Corn Laws should produce low prices, as he believed it would, he would, in the sequel, show that low prices had, by experience, been proved to be the reverse of beneficial to the working classes. Great pains had been taken by the economists to separate the interests of producer and consumer; but, the fact was, that except fixed annuitants, whose interest was in low prices and low wages, and who might abstractedly be considered as enemies to production, all classes of the country, although consumers, were also producers. The interest of all producers was to have a remunerating price for their produce; and this, under heavy burdens and taxation, they could not have under low prices. When they had fair prices, each formed good customers to the others; whereas, under low prices, no classes of producers getting profits, none could afford to buy from their neighbours: hence stagnation of trade and distress. The Corn Law was not so important to the landlords as to the labourers of this country. If the advocates of this change placed confidence in the speculations of one author more than another, that author was Adam Smith, and he said that the interests of the landlord and the labourer were inseparable from the interests of the community; whereas the interests of the manufacturer and the merchant were not always so inseparable from those of the community. Instead, therefore, of making manufactures the foundation of the commercial edifice, as the right hon. Gentleman appeared to do, he (Mr. Cayley) would, on the contrary, make agriculture its foundation. Agriculture had always, heretofore, been considered the basis, and upon that foundation had arisen the superstructure of our present commercial greatness. The produce from the land

was far greater than that from manufactures, while the cultivators of the land formed far the surest market for our manufactures. He (Mr. Cayley) was glad the right hon. Baronet had referred to the Agricultural Committee of 1836. He had had the pleasure of sitting on that Committee with him, and also on that of 1833. What were the chief complaints on those two Committees? The havoc and destruction to farming capital from a series of years of low prices. The right hon. Gentleman had adduced the evidence of Mr. Ellis, one of the witnesses, as favourable to moderate prices. He was not in favour of high prices, but only of such prices as would remunerate the farmer sufficiently to keep the labourer in employment, and the land in cultivation. Eighty shillings might be required under the heavy taxation of the war. In 1825, we saw that 64s. a quarter gave prosperity to all classes—commercial as well as agricultural. Perhaps 50s., or a little above in average seasons, for an average quality of red wheat, might now be sufficient to maintain the land in cultivation. He was no enemy to fair competition; but competition which, if moderate, might stimulate to energy and improvement, might, if immoderate, lead to utter ruin and despair. But who was Mr. Ellis, to whose evidence the right hon. Gentleman had referred? He could scarcely be called a regular farmer. He (Mr. Cayley) remembered being surprised at his evidence being so unlike that of most who had come before them, and had been at the pains to ascertain who he was; and, as far as he remembered, his entire occupation was not that of a farmer, but he was connected with the trade of Leicester; his farm was just outside of the town, and was rather a large market garden than a farm. Mr. Ellis, therefore, could not be considered in the light of a regular farmer. [Sir JAMES GRAHAM: The hon. Member has not referred to Mr. Howden's evidence.] There were many points in the right hon. Baronet's speech he should have wished to have replied to; but at that late hour of the night he feared to obtrude himself too long on the indulgence of the House. With respect to Mr. Howden's evidence, he perfectly well remembered him, and that of almost all the Scotch witnesses in 1836. But he thought that evidence was altogether on the side of good prices. He (Mr. Cayley) had found that most of the Scotch witnesses had been picked out to speak in opposition to the

distress which had been almost universally in 1836 deposed to by the English witnesses. After the first two or three witnesses, therefore, he had asked them all this question: "Taking any district to which you can speak from personal observation, do you think the farmers in it are a richer or a poorer set of men than they were fifteen years ago?" The answer universally was, "They are a poorer set of men." During this period low prices had been the rule—high prices the exception; under the former there had been ruin—under the latter, comfort, and relief from the pressure of taxation. The right hon. Gentleman might say, if the Corn Laws did not save the farmer from low prices, where was their virtue? But no one knew better than the right hon. Gentleman the cause of those low prices; and no one had more clearly and pathetically described them. It was the change in the value of money which caused the decline in prices; and the variations from that decline—when better prices and prosperity had prevailed, were attributable to nothing else than to tamperings with the currency. When money was plentiful, as in 1817-18; 1824-25; in 1836-37; and in 1844-45—there was comfort and employment; when it was scarce, as in 1815-16; in 1820-22; from 1826 to 35; and in 1840 and 1846—there was stagnation and distress. What the Corn Law did, when lowness of price existed—whether arising from scarcity of money, or from abundance of produce—was to prevent foreign importation from still further depressing the price. Then the right hon. Baronet had said that the present measure would tend to steady prices. Now he recollected that there was no other point in the two Committees of 1833 and 1836 which the right hon. Gentleman had laboured so earnestly to make out, as that the operation of the Corn Law had been in this country, above all others, even where importation was free, to produce steady prices. He (Mr. Cayley) had thought so too, and he had seen no reason to change his opinion. All evidence went to show that this year there had been less scarcity and less variation of price in England, than in any other country of Europe. No doubt there had been a great variation of quality; but prices had varied less than could have been expected under the circumstances. The right hon. Gentleman had said that this measure would produce high wages, full employment, and low prices; but ex-

perience showed that full employment and high wages were not compatible with low prices. What had been the experience of this country on repeated occasions under a state of low prices? Take the period since the general peace. During the high prices of the war, great prosperity for the most part prevailed. The two years succeeding the war, 1815-16, were accompanied by a great fall of prices. Distress was universal; riots and outbreaks in the manufacturing districts were the consequence; great losses in trade and farming, and a great disemployment of labour. In 1817-18 and the first part of 1819, prices greatly rose; this rise of prices was accompanied by great and general prosperity among all classes of the community. Towards the middle of 1819 prices began rapidly to fall; that fall in prices continued progressively till the end of 1822, when wheat was reduced to a price of 40s. a quarter. What was the state of the country and of the working classes during these three or four years of low prices? Stagnation of trade, ruin in the agricultural districts, misery, starvation, and a revolutionary spirit evinced in the more populous districts. 1819, June 14, a large meeting was held of unemployed workmen, on Hunslet Moor, near Leeds, seeking for annual Parliaments, and universal suffrage. June 6, a meeting was held of the weavers, at Glasgow, for similar objects. Aug. 16, was the Manchester Reform Meeting. Nov. 30, Lords Sidmouth and Castlereagh brought in the Six Acts for preventing seditious meetings. In 1820 was the Cato-street conspiracy. Dec., 1820, the Constitutional Association was formed to oppose disloyal principles. 1822, Lord Brougham said distress was universal except in the North Riding of Yorkshire. Now he was just old enough to remember this period, and could bear witness that the North Riding was no exception to the general rule of wretchedness which then prevailed. Did the great and overwhelming distress then existing under a state of low prices, look like low prices being favourable to the productive interests and the working classes of this country? and yet recollect that it was low prices with which, by their measures, they were again threatening the country. In 1823, prices revived—1823 and 1824, and 1825, were years of great and general prosperity. High prices, then, were not injurious, as experience could prove, to the best interests of the country. He (Mr. Cayley) was not advocating high prices, but moderate

remunerating prices; he was contending that a system, which would drive the labourer and even the tenant farmer to the workhouse, was a system which could be beneficial to no one; and he was apprehensive the present measure would lead to that. This was not a question immediately affecting the larger landowners or the larger manufacturers; they were almost above the effect of low prices. But legislation should always be for the weak; the strong could take care of themselves. He repeated that low prices had almost invariably been accompanied by distress, and high prices by prosperity. After the end of 1825, prices again fell, and remained low for several years, although three or four years of scarcity in 1828-9-30 and 1831 made them appear higher than they really were. In 1827, he remembered that barley and wool were a perfect drug on the market, and threatened to throw the wolds again out of cultivation. In 1830, such was the pressure on the farmers from insufficient prices, under adverse seasons, that they were obliged to give up very generally employing labour. The effect of that state of things—as one of the blessings of low prices—the House would remember, was the dreadful system of “Swing” fires and the burning of stacks. It was this state of general distress that prepared men’s minds for that great moral revolution, the Reform in Parliament, which was expected to be a panacea for all difficulties. Low prices, however, still continued; and what was the consequence? Mr. Fielden, in 1833—then, as still, Member for Oldham, gave an account to the House of a district in his neighbourhood, comprising thirty-five townships and 200,000 inhabitants. One quarter of these were visited by a charitable society; wheat was 52s. a quarter; the wages of the workmen 3s. 8½d. per week; and the average income per day of those visited, including wages and poor’s relief, was 2½d. The price of corn went on decreasing; and in December, 1834, the operatives of Preston, when wheat was 46s. a quarter, issued an address to their brother workmen in the manufacturing districts; and their principal complaint was of excessive labour, poverty, ignorance, and vice. In 1835, wheat fell to 39s. a quarter; and such a state of agricultural desolation as we then witnessed may a merciful Providence prevent our ever seeing again! To this long period of depression and distress under low prices succeeded the reaction of 1836 and 1837,

which were periods of higher prices and almost universal prosperity. Towards the close of 1837 came a temporary fall, which produced a striking embarrassment in commerce, from which there was a partial reaction; but in 1839 there came again another prostration of prices, and consequent distress: then they heard of the hon. Member for Stockport; but how? Did he then call for a repeal of the Corn Laws to effect a fall of prices for the benefit of the working classes? No; his complaint, conjointly with Mr. Smith, of the Chamber of Commerce at Manchester, and others, was, that the fall of prices had caused the loss of 40,000,000*l.* in the cotton trade alone. In 1840 the Manchester men obtained a Committee of that House to inquire into the cause of that great loss. They attributed it to the malign operations of the Bank, and to the money laws; but Mr. Cobden and Mr. Smith were reported to have floundered in their examinations, and failed to make good their accusations against the Bank. It was reported at the time that then Mr. Cobden stated—

"It is no use attempting to get rid of this most mischievous bank influence, unless we can get the country gentlemen to help us. Let us attack the Corn Laws, and when they are repealed, the country gentlemen will be ready enough to help us to put the monetary operations of the country in order."

So that the agitation for a repeal of the Corn Laws did not originate in any desire to help the poor, but in a desire to uphold the profits of the wealthy manufacturers of Manchester. In the year 1842 Sir Robert Peel referred to that loss sustained by the cotton trade as a probable cause of the depression then still continuing. If, however, that depression was, soon after the introduction of the right hon. Baronet's measure of 1842, succeeded by a period of prosperity, that prosperity was to be attributed, not to those measures, but to that natural reaction which in so many instances had been shown to follow periods of adversity, stimulated as it was by great railway outlays. This was shown at periods succeeding 1793, 1810, 1816, 1828, 1834-35, as well as after 1842. If those measures were really good, and if they caused the prosperity of which the right hon. Baronet boasted, why did it not still continue? The famine panic, which was one of the grounds assigned by the right hon. Baronet for the present measure, was prospective; and the prosperity, if produced by the former measures, ought to have continued till the famine actually showed itself. Yet the fact

was, that in the early part of this year there was great depression. The condition of the people was always better under high prices than under low. It was not that the labourer preferred to buy a dear loaf, but that he had better means of purchasing. On the other hand, the hon. Member for Devonshire had shown that at times of low prices, there was a greater number of persons dependent on the poor rate than at times of high prices. This statement of the Member for Devonshire was taken from all the unions of that large county. He (Mr. Cayley) was confident the same result would be found in other agricultural districts. He would read a letter to the House from a farmer of great skill and capital, not a heavily rented farmer, for he was a tenant under the Duke of Cambridge, who was well known as a liberal landlord: his rent was 500*l.* or 600*l.* a year; his farm was not even situated in a purely agricultural district; for it was only two miles from Kingston-on-Thames, which might almost be called a metropolitan township, being only seven or eight miles from London. This letter was pretty conclusive as to the injurious effects of low prices of corn on the condition of the labourer.

"Coombe Farm, Kingston-upon-Thames,
"24th Feb., 1846.

"Sir—I having had forty years' experience in farming, perhaps you will allow me to give my opinion in regard to Sir Robert Peel's Corn Law question.

"In referring to my books of the prices of wheat, I find, upon examination, that whenever the price of bread was cheap, we had the most misery and destitution in our parish.

"For example, in 1822 I sold my wheat, the average price being 40*s.* per quarter. I generally paid from 90*l.* to 100*l.* per annum poor rates; in that year I paid upwards of 300*l.* poor rates. In the same year, being one of the select vestry, and meeting on Thursday evenings, I have frequently found from one hundred to one hundred and fifty able-bodied men willing and begging for work, applying for relief; but from the low price of corn, the farmers had no means of giving them employment.

"In the year 1835, when the corn was at the same value, the same thing occurred: we had more destitution and misery than you can possibly imagine.

"Being a guardian of the Kingston Union, I am happy to say we have not an able-bodied man on that establishment, and very short of the usual quantity of poor in the house.

"The Corn Law League has done us (the farmers) the injustice of maligning our characters, without any just cause; and in the year 1822, and every year for the last forty years, I have never paid less than 12*s.* per week; and I believe that I can safely aver the average has been 15*s.* for the same time, as well as my neighbours.

"If Sir Robert Peel carries the present Corn

Law Bill, the farmer must be inevitably ruined; for, independent of low prices, if the farmer cannot employ the labourer, he must keep him.—
From your humble servant,

“FRAN. GARNER.”

The agricultural system was, as Mr. Garner had properly observed, one under which landlords and tenants considered themselves united by peculiar ties with the labourers on their properties and farms. They felt themselves under more than the obligations of a temporary contract; they felt themselves under obligations in reference to that class, whether the labourers could be profitably employed or not. If the property of the landlords and tenants were destroyed, it was impossible to say what would be the ultimate effect on the interest of the labouring classes. It was on these grounds that he upheld the opinion he had always entertained, that this was a dangerous experiment which had been proposed by Ministers. Indeed, he considered it so full of risk, and so deficient in support by sober evidence, authority, or experience, that of all the bubble speculations of the last autumn, he could call to mind none so purely chimerical and visionary as this legislative speculation of Her Majesty's Government. After the details into which his hon. Friend the Member for Somersetshire (Mr. Miles) had just gone, it was unnecessary for him to go into much evidence to show the grounds of his impression that corn would sustain a serious diminution in price. His hon. Friend had already referred to Mr. Barrow's (of Nottinghamshire) challenge to any one to take his offer to lay down good red wheat, of a certain weight per bushel, at 40s. a quarter in London, within the next three years. If, as the Ministers and the Whigs thought, wheat would not fall below 48s. a quarter, any Whig or Minister would gain 20,000*l.* by accepting the offer to lay down 50,000 quarters at 40s. If wheat fell, as Mr. Barrow believed, to 32s. a quarter, Mr. Barrow would win 20,000*l.* This was a fair wager; and Mr. Barrow being an old cornfactor, ought to know something of the matter. He would now advert very shortly to the opinion held by Mr. Sandars, a large cornfactor of Wakefield, as to the prospective prices of wheat under the operation of the present Ministerial measures. Mr. Sandars writes as follows:—

“As to the effect of the proposed measure on future prices, I expect to see wheat settle down in average seasons at 30s. to 35s. per quarter; but it won't surprise me to see the price at 25s. in 1849, if we have good harvests between this and

then. We shall be overwhelmed with supplies, and shall become, from cheapness, an exporting country. I confess I cannot see how our farmers can survive this competition—it will cause a revolution amongst them—numbers must be ruined, and a vast many estates must change hands—say from the present lords to the cotton lords.

“GEORGE SANDARS.

“Wakefield, 10th March, 1846.”

Such opinions, from such authorities, he must say, were enough to make a man of circumspection tremble for the consequences of the measure proposed; especially when he saw its advocates under a sort of infatuated delusion that no fall, or scarcely any fall, in price would take place under it. Then the right hon. Baronet seemed to imply that it was an acknowledged fact that the people were in favour of the proposed measure of free trade. It had been boldly asserted that the people were in favour of the measure. If such were indeed the case, he should bow with deference to the general desire in such a matter; but he had yet to learn that the people were in favour of the measure. The history of the Anti-Corn-Law League was, that it had circulated tracts, held meetings, sent persons round the country to make speeches, and in the progress of its agitation it was almost entirely unopposed. In consequence of the energy, the activity, and the agitation of that body, the tendency of opinion at this moment among two-thirds of the middle classes was rather in favour of the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel). But where the question had been fairly put to the working classes, three-fourths took an entirely different view. How had the question been put in general to the working classes? “If we have free trade, your wages won't fall, and you will have bread at a much lower price: are you for free trade?” What working man to such a question, so put, would or could answer “No?” But was this the fair and honest way of putting the question to the working classes? The workmen of England had already, however, disavowed that that was the true question. The true way of putting the question was this:—“Free trade in the abstract appears a true doctrine; for to buy in the cheapest market appears to be the natural desire of every man. But this country for some centuries has been in a very artificial state. Very few of its present trades and manufactures were indigenous to it. Most of our manufactures, if not all, have been fostered by laws to protect them from foreign competition, until at this moment, if it were not for heavy

public and local taxes, there is scarce any branch of British production, agricultural or manufacturing, that could not, from the inherent energy of the British character, compete without any protection with any foreign rivals. Even in spite of our taxation, there are some of the simplest branches of manufacture, *i. e.* where machinery does almost all the work, and human labour enters into it scarcely at all, or if at all, through the instrumentality of a child—in such cases as the manufacture of yarns especially—in spite of taxation our produce need not at present fear an unrestricted competition; and so some of our most fertile lands might safely be left even at present, perhaps, to a perfectly unrestricted competition with the produce of foreign lands. If all the producers of England were of this superior class, no branch of trade need be alarmed at the idea of free trade. But it happens that the majority of the lands and the majority of the manufacturers and handicrafts of this country are not so superior to foreign rivalry as to be able under the heavy pressure of our taxation, without great risk, to undergo an unrestricted competition. If the agricultural labourers, the silk weavers, the hosiers, and many classes of operatives and handicraftsmen, were, by free trade, to be thrown out of employment—they could not buy so much cheap bread as they now do of dear bread, and the general rate of wages in the labour market would fall—are you, the working classes, willing to run the risk of so dangerous a contingency as this?" To the question so put, and fairly put, the operatives have, with characteristic good sense, for the most part, preferred the practical smaller loaf they now possess, to the visionary larger loaf which an unfair and one-sided free trade promises to them. The League have appeared to be so convinced of this common sense view of the masses, that they have never, as far as I have heard, dared to hold open meetings in Manchester and the manufacturing districts in favour of a repeal of the Corn Laws. Meetings had been held in Manchester which were called public meetings, but had no title to the name. He had been informed of instances in which tickets were distributed in the factories, and the overlookers were stationed at the doors of the meetings to see that the workmen attended them. At spontaneous meetings of the working classes the current of opinion ran in an opposite direction. The sentiments held by

the working classes, as he was advised, were either in favour of protection, or against the measure of Sir R. Peel, unless the reductions he contemplated were accompanied by corresponding reductions in taxation and debts. Whatever might be the views entertained by philosophers, or by those who thought they were philosophers, it had not yet been received by the majority of the working classes as a truism that competition, to its full extent, was an advantage. So far as the silk weavers were concerned, they had held about a dozen open public meetings in various parts of England, denouncing foreign competition as the greatest injury to their trade. These meetings had been held since the announcement of the Ministerial Tariff. Within the last three or four weeks, various meetings had been held in the cotton and other districts—most of them in the open air—where the freest discussion was invited and allowed; and, almost universally, the expression of working men's opinions was in favour of protection to native industry. At Leicester, at Birmingham, at Leigh, at a meeting of the surrounding nine large manufacturing parishes, at Sheffield, and various other places, numerous meetings were held, and either a total apathy on the subject of free trade existed, or the resolutions carried were strongly in favour of protection of labour, and against a system of relentless competition. Competition, indeed, no doubt stimulated to improvement; but to healthy competition there were limits, and in excess it produced incompetency to carry on a profitable business. But there was one system of competition into which he (Mr. Cayley) and the protectionists were ready to enter—a competition to ameliorate the condition of the working classes. He anticipated that from the discussion on the question of the Corn Laws, whatever might be the final result of that discussion, one great benefit would be derived; it might lead them, on both sides, to consider more than hitherto they had done—with a more earnest purpose, and with more Christian feelings—the condition of the great body of the people. He was convinced that, notwithstanding the sneers thrown out on that side of the House, there was no sacrifice to improve, to better the position, and to add to the comforts of the working classes, which the landlords of this country were not ready and willing to make. Was it likely, he would ask, *primâ facie*, that the members

of a class who, from generation to generation, had been the hereditary stewards and distributors of wealth, would now be guided by any mean, base, or unworthy motives in their political course, where the interests of the poor were concerned? He could affirm from his own observation, that the country gentlemen of England, as a body, and their families, considered no duty so paramount as an attention to the comfort and welfare of the neighbouring poor around them. Some, however, were more able than others to effect all they desired in this respect. He did not desire to cast any reflection on, or to make any disadvantageous contrast with, any other class; but so much he would in justice say for the landlords of England. It was such a competition as that he had mentioned, which should be the aim of all their legislation. It was not profit alone they should seek: it was the comfort and the welfare of the people for which they should chiefly struggle; and it was only in reference to the latter result that free trade should be considered. And who that had witnessed the privations, the domestic martyrdom which the poor had frequently to undergo, and the manly fortitude, and the Christian forbearance with which they endured the hardships to which they are exposed, but would be glad to join in any legislation or in any expedients by which their condition might with permanent safety to themselves be relieved? The right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government had prophesied that, should this country adopt a free-trade policy, the example would speedily be followed by other nations. But what hopes had been held out? Mr. Huskisson, with a similar object, had in 1825 and 1826 prophesied the same thing; but instead of that, manufacturers in other countries having grown and extended more and more, they had become less willing each year to reciprocate such a policy as that then and now again recommended. They could not judge of the general feeling in America from the expression of opinion from any individual member of Congress; and it was quite certain that the free States of New England, and Mr. Webster, the leader of an important party, would not be in favour of any relaxation of the existing code, which would endanger the manufacturing progress of the Northern States of the Union. If the greatness, the commercial greatness of England had been the consequence of a free-trade policy, then, indeed, M. Guizot might point out to the

French Parliament the example of England. He might say—"See what free trade England has attained: let us do likewise." But the very reverse had been the fact. England had not become great through free trade; and neighbouring nations, when they desired to imitate her, would read her history, and find in the pages of that history the indisputable truth, that it was under a long course of protection to her domestic industry that England had arrived at her present pitch of greatness, commercial and political. He (Mr. Cayley) knew the trite assertion that was used by some in relation to this fact—that it was in spite, and not because of protection, that British commerce and agriculture had thriven. As well might they say that the civilization which had gradually grown up to humanize the Christian world, had grown up in spite, and not on account, of the progress of Christianity. There was no evidence whatever to show that any great nation on the face of the earth had become great and remained great under a system of free trade. All evidence and all history pointed the other way. Had any nation ever been greater in commerce and agriculture than England? Protection, and protection alone, had been her policy. And now we were, without any sufficient cause, to rush headlong into an opposite course. The present measures of the Government could be considered in no other light than that of a political speculation—in his opinion, a great bubble speculation. Although he placed no great reliance on his own individual conclusions, he (Mr. Cayley) still placed great reliance on the experience of centuries. From all that fell from the free-trade side of the House, and from the confidence of their assumptions, a stranger to our history would imagine that our experience had all been the other way; that every nation in the world had beaten us in manufactures, in agriculture and commerce—and had all thus beaten us by following the system of free trade, while we had followed the system of protection; and that their object merely was to persuade us to try an experiment that in every other case had proved successful; while the truth was, that the experiment had never been tried before on a large scale with success; and that all success in industrial operations had arisen from following the opposite system of protecting domestic labour. Now let us see the fate of those who would venture upon the unknown sea of experiment

without chart or compass. He (Mr. Cayley) was one of the deputation of 200 Members who waited upon Lord Melbourne in 1837 to urge the policy of the penny postage. Adjourning from Downing-street to that House, Members naturally discussed the probable results of the proposal made by the deputation. He sat near the hon. Members for Montrose und Kendal (Mr. Hume and Mr. Warburton), great advocates now, as always, of free trade. In a conversation, by no means confidential, he heard both those Members say that they would be willing to join a joint-stock company to farm the postage revenue at the old rate under the proposed system of the penny postage. What would have been the result of that bold speculation on their parts? The revenue from the postage under the penny charge had fallen off somewhere on the average about 700,000*l.* or 800,000*l.* per annum; and although gradually increasing at the rate of, he believed, about 30,000*l.* a year, it might be at least twenty years before the revenue under the new system equalled that under the old: causing a loss to the joint-stock company of which the two hon. Members would have formed a conspicuous part, of about 12,000,000*l.* before they began to receive a shilling of interest on their capital. Had those hon. Members been taken at their word, and the Government had held them to their bargain, the workhouse and not the House of Commons would before this have become their portion. And that was exactly the portion, viz., that of the workhouse, he so much dreaded from the proposed experimental measures of the Government, for thousands of the industrious classes of this country, whose labour had hitherto been protected. The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, however, had consoled them with the assurance that the two Sicilies had consented to reciprocate with us on the principle of free importations. Indeed! What an example! Happy Sicily! Happy Sardinia! fertile islands in the wide waste of waters! once in great part the granary of mighty Rome! but now embarrassed with little of the incumbrance of agriculture, and with less of the incumbrance of manufactures!—a prey and a sport to every passing gun-boat! you have yet treasured up for yourselves the inestimable satisfaction of having been the first nation of modern Europe to put into solemn practice the whimsical chimera of a perfectly unrestricted system of imports! Perhaps

the strongest objection he (Mr. Cayley) felt to the measure before the House, was that it ran counter to the principle of all law. We were all slaves to the law, to the end that we might all be free. We had been in like manner the servants of protection, to the end that none should thrive at the expense of another. The object of all law was to protect the weak against the strong. What was the objection to the feudal system? That it was a government of the strongest. What were the natural laws of the forest? That the larger beasts should devour the smaller. What were the objects of this measure? An absorbing, relentless, he might call it a savage, competition for work and for bread between human beings. And this fierce scramble was to go on without restriction or control on the part of the Government. As well might they abolish all law; since the main objects of law were to protect the property and life of the defenceless from the violence of the powerful. But this measure seemed to him (Mr. Cayley) to restore in its worst form the lawless tyranny of the strong over the weak. It was not, as he had said before, the rich and the powerful who need be alarmed for the immediate consequences of this measure; the great landlord, the rich capitalist, the powerful manufacturer, might be greater by contrast, than before, from the decline in the fortunes of their humbler neighbours. But those who would suffer, were exactly those whom the law ought to protect: the poor manufacturer, the small landowner, the yeoman, the small farmer, the average workman, or the inferior artisan, would be crushed in the remorseless encounter. Was there a weak trader, a weak manufacturer, an operative past his prime, a labourer verging upon his decline—this measure promised to them degradation and ruin. It was a law to assist the strong to demolish the weak. As if any necessity existed for legally aiding in a consummation too common under all circumstances. This measure, carried into operation, would, in fact, be a law to hasten the weak in going to the wall. And what was most strange was, that it was done under the pretence of helping the poor. Up to a certain point the cheapest market principle might be true; but it had its limits. The free operation of capital was certainly a system which led in its results to a great neglect of the poor, whose circumstances frequently required moral intervention. It was a

system which he could characterize in no other terms than that of the "Devil take the hindmost." But the political economists said that this system must be left to work itself out. Why, then, were those philosophers not consistent with themselves and their own doctrines? It was said, capital ought to be left to its free operation; then why did they object to Irish absentees? Why did they object to the Irish ejections? They complained of the conduct of the Irish landlords: had they not a right to manage their estates as they pleased? Had they not a right to the free operation of their capital? Why did they support the Poor Laws? Were they not a disturbance of the free operation of capital? The philosophic system was that of the physical check of Malthus, which left redundant human beings to starve down to fit and proper numbers. Then with regard to banking: why was not every man allowed to open a bank? Because it would create inconvenience. Yet that was an interference with the free operation of capital. Why were they interfering with the affairs of railways? Why did they prohibit slavery? If a man could purchase a cheaper labourer, why, on their own principle, did they restrain the free operation of his capital? Why did they object to the Duke of Newcastle doing what he would with his own? Surely that objection was an interference with the free operation of capital! The free traders, in addressing the landed body, were very fond of telling them that property had its duties as well as its rights. What did this mean from their mouths? What an inconsistency and an interference with the free operation of capital was this! But the fact was, that moral considerations could neither be left out of this system or that, but must equally form a part, and a principal part, of all systems. For that reason, believing that capital had its duties as well as its rights, the protection party, as a body, had been in favour of limiting the hours of labour in factories, when the occupation or the atmosphere produced sickness, emaciation, and distortion. But you—said the hon. Member (Mr. Cayley) turning to the free traders—think turning off a workman immediately after his prime, and going into a cheaper market, the duty of capital. You think free trade, and profit and cheapest markets, most important matters. So they are; but they are not all-important. There are greater and worthier things for a nation's consideration

than these. Yes, believe me, religion, virtue, loyalty, patriotism, deeply-rooted associations, social affections, local attachments, are of infinitely greater value than mere commercial theories. A nation's virtue and a nation's happiness are far worthier objects of your care than mere profit, except as profit conduces to comfort; and in all cases the mere earnings of capital should bend to the higher considerations of a people's moral and social welfare. But your abstract views, now proposed to be absolutely carried into effect, leave out of the estimate these higher considerations. Your cheapest market principle dreams of profit and profit alone. Your theory is to consider man as a machine by which you are to make a profit; and the moment the prime of his years is passing or passed, your system bids you go to your cheaper market for a younger and stronger man—to forsake the servant who has spent the best of his days in your service, and to leave him to the accident of fate. This system, we believe, is not in accordance with the Christian religion—nor in conformity with the duty to our neighbour—it has not been the practice either of the English aristocracy or of the English agricultural districts. You there, under what has been elsewhere called a remnant of the patriarchal system, see old men working on the land, and old retainers and pensioners whiling away a cheerful old age around the premises on which through a laborious life they have toiled. You see old tenants or their widows on farms, who have been old servants, who have the same taste for the land as the hon. Member for Stockport proclaims that he and you entertain; these tenants would not have been placed on their farms merely on account of skill. Are we on all occasions to go like you to the cheapest market? Are we to turn off old tenants because their husbandry is not the newest and most skilful? Are we to turn adrift old servants, because in our service they have become less strong, and because it is cheaper and more profitable to get rid of these incumbrances on our money profits? And yet these are the legitimate results to be drawn from your doctrine of going always to the cheapest market, and of acting on a system of unrestricted competition. Those, however, have not been the principles in which we have been brought up, or the practice of our lives. They are alien to our sentiments, and revolting to our sympathies, as we believe

them to be repugnant to Christian duty. Hard fortune, severe trial, dire necessity, cruel laws, may tend to teach us a different lesson, and the sterner and harder lesson of practising it; they may force upon us a system so painful to contemplate; but if that evil day should arrive, it would not then be our own fallen fortunes that we should the most deplore, but that our country had by its own fatuity committed the suicidal act which had eradicated from out its bosom those best treasures—more precious than all your profits, and all your gold—of loyalty, virtue, patriotism, of the social affections, and of deep-rooted, devoted attachments, which have hitherto been the moral foundations of the nation's strength, and the chief pillars of the people's hope. But if the system of cheapness alone is to govern all our legislation, I would ask, where it is to stop? And I would now venture to address those independent Members of the Conservative party who at the first outset of this struggle, when two-thirds of his supporters left his ranks, still with a view of retaining him in office, even at the sacrifice of their consistency and of their own convictions, still gallantly and chivalrously adhered to the right hon. Baronet in that crisis of his fortunes. Do they still believe the right hon. Baronet can be maintained in power? I think not; for I am convinced there are scarce a dozen Members of the House who do not consider the Government of the right hon. Gentleman at an end. Let those hon. Members, then, pause to consider the ultimate tendencies of this cheapest market principle. They still at least venerate our ancient institutions. I ask them if the Church is based on the cheapest principle? Are the Colonies and our colonial system—the foundation of our widely-extended Empire—are they founded on the cheapest system? Rely upon it this system applied to our Colonies will be the signal for their separation from the mother country. I have shown that the weakest and the poorest will be the greatest sufferers from this measure; but will the greatest and the most illustrious escape its ultimate operation? Her Majesty. I am bold to say, has not a more loyal and devoted subject than myself; but I cannot help anticipating that this system may, in the end, be equally applied to the Crown, and that some wretched spirit of economy may one day suggest that a retired ex-President of the United States, at a salary of 4,000*l.* a year, might make as useful and a cheaper

head of the State than the descendants of the proud line of the Monarchs of England. You may, therefore, at this critical moment, maintain to us, in their present integrity, the Church, the Colonies, the cottage, and the Crown; but in office the Minister you cannot maintain. If these considerations will not weigh with you, save us, at least, from becoming "an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word," an object of mockery and of scorn to the nations of the world—save to us, at least, I implore you, the liberty and the labour of a free, a faithful, and an industrious people.

"That old familiar tree,
Whose glory and renown
Are spread o'er land and sea,
Say, would'st thou hack it down?
Woodman, forbear thy stroke;
Cut not its earth-born ties;
Oh, spare that aged oak,
Now towering to the skies!"

The hon. Member, turning to the manufacturing Members, went on:—

"'Twas thy forefather's hand
That placed it by his cot;
There, woodman, let it stand,
Thine axe shall harm it not.
Woodman, spare that tree;
Touch not a single bough;
In youth it shelter'd thee,
Do thou protect it now!"

Debate adjourned.

House adjourned at One o'clock.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Tuesday, May 12, 1846.

THE CORN LAWS.—PRESENTATION OF PETITION.

The EARL of HARDWICKE presented a petition from the Corporation of the Bedford Level, against any alteration in the Corn Laws. There was no part of the country which had a better right to send a petition on that subject than the Bedford Level, as it was a district of country which might be called artificial, having been brought to its present degree of fertility by the application of capital and industry; and the petitioners stated that the present prosperous state of that district could not be expected to continue if the Corn Laws were repealed, and a consequent reduction caused in the price of grain.

EARL FITZWILLIAM said, that notwithstanding the forebodings of the noble

Earl, he had no doubt that both the noble Earl and himself would continue to receive their rents as usual from the Bedford Level after the passing of the measure on the subject of the Corn Laws, which would be soon before their Lordships, from the other House of Parliament. He had not the slightest doubt, that notwithstanding the existence of a perfect free trade in corn, they would continue to receive their rents as usual from their estates in the Bedford Level, that was, provided these rents were not raised too high in consequence of any delusion as to the effect of protection; and he was enabled to state, both on the part of the noble Earl and himself, that such was not the case. He had, therefore, no doubt that ten years hence they would receive the same amount of rent which they received at the present moment from their estates in that district.

House Adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Tuesday, May, 12, 1846.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL—THIRD READING.—SECOND NIGHT.

MR. NEWDEGATE rose to resume the Adjourned Debate, and remarked that it must be in the recollection of the House in what manner the debate had been terminated on the preceding night, by the speech of the hon. Member for Yorkshire—a speech characterized not less by soundness of reasoning and a natural eloquence inspired by the feelings of the speaker, than by the triumph it exhibited over the physical infirmities which unhappily had oppressed the hon. Member. As he listened to that speech, it seemed to him as though the spirit of those statesmen who once ennobled the House, had animated the hon. Member. It almost seemed as if the genius of Pitt or of Canning had returned to elevate the debates of that House above the dead level to which they too often were reduced. He desired briefly to advert to one or two statements of the hon. Member for Somersetshire (Mr. Miles), which had been controverted, or rather denied, by the right hon. Baronet the Home Secretary. The right hon. Baronet had stated that the hon. Member for Somersetshire had informed the House that there existed in Russia a disposable surplus of 20,000,000 quarters of wheat above the consumption of that country; and that in America land

had every year been producing wheat for a lengthened period without manure; and the right hon. Baronet had ridiculed these statements. Now, however the right hon. Baronet might attempt to throw discredit on these statements—however determined the Government might be to take this “leap in the dark,” it was important to communicate all the information that could be obtained as to the probable amount of corn to be expected from abroad in the event of the abolition of the Corn Laws. The statement of the hon. Member for Somersetshire was fully borne out by the authority of Mr. Ellsworth, the Commissioner of Patents in the United States, as shown by the following passage in Mr. Ellsworth’s report:—

“The wheat lands in the west are so rich in proper qualities, that probably for years no injurious effects of a constant succession of this crop need be apprehended; but in western New York, and perhaps in some of the earlier settled sections of Ohio, there is some danger, and the attention of the people has been called to the subject.”

Now, with respect to the other statements of the hon. Member for Somerset. In page 328 of the commercial tariffs and regulations of the several States of Europe and America, under the head Russia, in the documents laid before the House, compiled by Mr. McGregor, it would be found that the total average consumption of Russia, including seed and the supply of distilleries, amounted to 141,000,000 chetworts; the total average disposable surplus to 40,000,000 chetworts, or about 28,000,000 quarters. So that, if there were any error in the estimate as to Russia, it was to be attributed to the Papers laid before Parliament by the Government: while, as to the land in America, he (Mr. Newdegate) having himself been there, could testify to the substantial correctness of the statement he had referred to. He had been at some pains to ascertain the prices of wheat at the great port of America, New Orleans; and he found the average price of the last two years was 24s. 8d. per quarter, and that of flour in proportion; and the expense of transit to this country 10s. per quarter. So that if the supply of corn in America exceeded the demand—and no one who knew the resources of such vast States as Ohio, Illinois, &c., could doubt that it would be so, if a demand were created in this country—wheat would be imported from New Orleans to Liverpool or London under 35s. per quarter as an average. When, therefore, our ports

were thrown open to the world, we should have a competition in our markets of supplies from both hemispheres at that rate; for it had been abundantly proved that the countries of Europe could compete with America at that price. There could be no doubt that our prices would be reduced to the general level of the world; and that wheat in this country would, after the repeal of the Corn Laws, be at from 35s. to 40s. per quarter as an average. He would next advert to some topics in the speech of the right hon. Gentleman the Home Secretary, who last night had again spoken of this measure as the result of the Ministerial sense of a great public danger. The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had himself acknowledged that if he had attributed his proposition of the measure solely to the "pressure" of distress in Ireland, he would have been disingenuous. What, then, was this pressing danger? He (Mr. Newdegate) did not see the cause for the apprehensions entertained by the Government, unless it were the prospect of a stagnation of trade. But he (Mr. Newdegate) believed there would probably be a stagnation in trade whether this measure had been introduced or not; and he considered that the measures passed in 1844 would aggravate any such pressure. He believed that the Government had felt the necessity for some remedial measures in favour of the manufacturing interests, with a view to mitigate the mischief of their own monetary measure; but he was still more strongly persuaded that the present position and professed opinions of the Government were to be attributed, in a great degree, to the progress of agitation. And when it was considered how many instances might be enumerated in which, from the passing of the Emancipation Act of 1829, to the present period, including the grant to Maynooth, which was the consequence of the Repeal agitation and the monster meetings, the Minister now at the head of affairs had yielded to similar pressures, could it be expected that such popular influence would ever cease to have a corresponding effect upon him? The noble Lord the Member for the city of London had warned the agricultural Members to yield in time. He had adverted to the successful agitation which had preceded the Emancipation Act of 1829—the Reform Act and the Maynooth Bill. The House had seen Her Majesty's Government yielding to the pressure of the Anti-Corn-Law League in the present

change in their commercial policy; and could the House believe that if these measures passed, in consequence of the exertions of the Anti-Corn-Law League, that the Repeal Association would be less successful in the result of their agitation? This was the opinion entertained by the hon. and learned Member for Cork in 1844, who had said at a meeting in Conciliation Hall—

"I cannot bring myself to doubt that Peel himself might be the man to propose the repeal of the Union." ["Hear, hear, hear," and a laugh.] "Then hurra for Peel and Repeal!" [*Laughter.*] "When you talk of a man's future conduct, the best grounds upon which to conjecture what it will be, are those afforded by his past conduct." [*Loud cries of "Hear, hear!"*] "In the antecedents of Peel, what is there to justify a disbelief in the possibility of his being the man to propose a repeal of the Union?" ["Hear, hear?"] "We have nothing to be grateful for to Peel and the 200 myrmidons who go from one side to the other at his command." [*Loud cries of "Hear, hear!"*] "No! Thank Conciliation Hall—thank agitation!" ["Hear, hear?"]

And then came the memorable words with reference to the Maynooth Grant Agitation:—

"I thank you, Conciliation Hall, I am obliged to you, Repeal Association; Maynooth ought to pray for you."

The introduction of the present measure, in fact, was another added to many proofs which the right hon. Baronet had furnished, of deficiency in that firmness which was the first characteristic of a great statesman. Were his supporters to go on in a similar course? Why should not Repeal of the Union, then, be expected as one of the right hon. Baronet's future concessions? Why should the right hon. Baronet disappoint the hon. Member for Cork, after having gratified the hon. Member for Stockport? The loss of character in public men was perhaps one of the results most to be regretted in the introduction of the present measure; and it had been well said by the hon. Member for Huntingdon, that if the country were suffering under any dearth, it was a dearth of statesmen. The Gentlemen on his side of the House, who contended for protection, had been taunted by the Secretary for the Home Department, with having, during the last two years, maintained great silence on this subject; but was there no reason for that silence? When the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government told them that the measures he from time to time brought in during the last three years were but stepping-stones to greater changes, such as

that which he had now proposed, might his hon. Friends not, with reason, think that any word which dropped from them during that time would be turned against them hereafter, and that they would be told they were committed to the measures of the right hon. Baronet? The right hon. Gentleman the Secretary for the Home Department had referred to the observation which fell from the hon. Member for Shrewsbury with regard to the exportation of bullion which would take place when the measure passed; and he said he agreed with the hon. Member for Shrewsbury, that in the present state of our monetary system, large exportations of the precious metals were inconsistent with a sound state of the currency; thus differing from the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, who said he did not care whether such exportation took place or not—indeed that he wished it might. How the right hon. Baronets came to a coincidence on the principles of free trade, differing in so essential an element of our commercial relations as the monetary system and the effects of an exportation of bullion, he did not know; but the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government stated, that we should bring the bullion back by the exportation of our manufactures. The right hon. Baronet did not tell, however, at what sacrifice and loss to the trade of the country this would be done. But the Home Secretary admitted that, even after this pauca of free trade was carried, in times of scarcity there would be an exportation of bullion. He was of the same opinion; and he asked the House, viewing the effect of an exportation of bullion in 1825 and 1839, to consider what would be the result. The right hon. Gentleman went on to show that the way of getting out of the difficulty of our monetary system, in the case of a glut of the markets for our manufactures, would be to send manufactures abroad when the home markets were glutted, and so glut the foreign markets to relieve the home market, receiving payment in grain without payment of duty. Now, supposing this to be the case, the only effect would be that the manufacturer would have an opportunity of shifting the loss from himself upon the shoulders of the agriculturists, by transferring his goods to foreign markets, and bringing back importations of corn, which would injure the farmer. What would be the effect on the circulation? By the first statement there had been a glut of manufactures; therefore

there would be distress among the manufacturers. Then they would bring on a glut of corn by the importation, which would cause distress among the agriculturists. But any one who knew anything of exchanges, knew what a forced importation turned exchanges against the country importing. Now the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department had predicted that the foreign markets would be glutted to relieve the home market. But importation of necessities, such as tea, sugar, &c., for home consumption, would go on, and would not be paid for in manufactures, because the foreign markets in the case supposed would be glutted: they must therefore be paid for in bullion exported from this country, and a drain must ensue; for exchanges, owing to a forced importation of grain, must already have turned against this country. They would therefore have a monetary crisis, by reason of the exportation of bullion, according to the system of the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, more severe than had ever been known in this country. The two right hon. Baronets had declared for free trade, and adopted the doctrines respecting free trade from Adam Smith and Ricardo; but they had rejected the opinions of those authorities respecting the monetary system. He believed that those writers, when they advocated free trade, understood that a different monetary system from that of this country would be required under free trade; and this the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) had admitted in 1844. The right hon. Baronet claimed the authority of those eminent political economists to sanction his commercial policy, but repudiated them with respect to monetary matters. [Sir R. Peel having indicated by gesture a denial of these remarks of the hon. Gentleman, Mr. Newdegate observed] I will state this in the terms of the right hon. Baronet's own speech on the Bank Charter question, in 1844:—

“ In support of that opinion they, the opponents of the present system, have undoubtedly the high authority of Adam Smith and of Ricardo. Both these eminent writers assume that immediate convertibility into coin is all that is requisite to prevent the excessive issue of paper. It is no impeachment of their sagacity, if, in the progress which this science, like all other sciences, is making, there be reason to doubt the soundness of any particular opinion which they may have delivered. And it is our duty to disregard their authority, and to act on the conclusions of our own judgment, if either reason or experience convinces us that they are safer guides.”

The right hon. Baronet (Sir J. Graham) had said much on the reduction of prices of British produce; but he did not admit what must be the effect on the agricultural interest and the operatives of such a reduction, and on the national resources: he (Mr. Newdegate) would refer to the opinions of Mr. Malthus, recorded in that able work, by the Home Secretary, "An Address to the Landowners on Corn and Currency." Mr. Malthus said, that if the price of corn were to fall to 50s., and labour and other commodities nearly in proportion, there could be no doubt that the stockholder would be benefited at the expense of the industrial classes, and that Government would in reality pay 7, 8, and 9 per cent. interest for the debt, instead of 5 per cent., and for the last 200,000,000*l.* of it not less than 10 per cent. Mr. Malthus thus continued:—

"If we consider with what an increased weight the taxes on tea, sugar, malt, soap, candles, &c., would in this case bear on the labouring classes of society, and what proportion of their income all the active industrious middle orders of the State, as well as the higher orders, must pay, in assessed taxes and the various articles of custom and excise, the pressure will appear to be absolutely intolerable. Indeed, if the measure of value (meaning corn) were ready to fall as we have supposed, there is great reason to fear that the country would be absolutely unable to continue the payment of the present interest of the national debt."

Now this applied to a reduction to 50s., not 35s., and applied *à fortiori* to the present case. It was urged by the right hon. Baronet, in justification of his measures, that this country would not become dependent on foreign countries for food; but to his (Mr. Newdegate's) poor apprehension, if they established a direct exchange between foreign corn and our manufactures, that must be the effect. The right hon. Baronet (Sir J. Graham) had said, that the demand for food in this country was certain. Well, then, they knew that the home production was able to meet the demand, with the exception of a small average of importation at a moderate price. Now there were three reasons why home-grown corn must be displaced, if the free traders succeeded in their object, which was to exchange manufactures for corn by direct barter, as it were. First, if they exported manufactures, and brought corn in return, they must sell the corn, when they had got it, in the markets of this country, being the only open markets, and could afford to sell it cheaper than corn merely imported for sale, and not as a remittance in payment for manufactures. With this

additional advantage, how could it be doubted that it would displace home-grown grain, which was more costly in its production. The difference of the cost of production, as against the corn grower of this country, was the second reason, and of itself sufficient to cause the displacement of a large quantity of home-grown grain from our supply. The third reason was the fact that the markets of this country, being the only open markets of the world, would become the markets for the surplus grain of the world; and every one knew that, in ordinary years, there must be a surplus production of grain in every country depending upon its own supplies, or there would be frequent periods of scarcity. For these three reasons he could not doubt but that a very large quantity of home-grown corn, perhaps to the extent of six or seven million quarters, would be supplanted in the markets of this country; and to the extent of that displacement we must become dependent on foreign nations for our supplies of food. It had been assumed that wages did not vary with the price of food. He should have thought, however, that when they remembered the fall of wages coincident with the fall of prices in wheat from the commencement of the present century to the present time, or the mass of individual evidence they had received, the statements of the noble Lord the member for Stamford (the Marquess of Granby) for instance, must have convinced the Government that, in one particular at least, they were wrong; whilst the statements of many other Members near him ought to have taught them to doubt their theory. For the reasons he had given, he conceived that the Corn Laws were not unjust; and for one he would not be a party to disappointing those who sent him to the House to combat these newfangled doctrines. The noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) and the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) had both bid the aristocracy yield, and said, that if they would preserve their position, and retain their power and influence in this and the other House, they had better succumb; but he, humble individual as he was, told them that they would do better to convince the people of this country that they had courage and honesty to act upon their convictions. He had always felt it was wiser to confront any enemy than to cause desertion from one's own ranks; and he thought the present position of the Government was a strong instance in proof of this. What was that position now, compared with six

months ago? The feelings of the people of this country were never so much outraged as when they saw persons whom they had been accustomed to revere, changing their principles of action; and if anything could pave the way for the destruction of the aristocracy, it must be such tergiversation as they had lately witnessed. Let the House of Lords remember that their House was a court of justice as well as a legislative assembly, and that the preservation of the character of the Upper House was of more real importance to its stability than any transient acquisition of popularity at the expense of principle. A mistake had been propagated, both by the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) and the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel), in speaking of the population of this, the most productive country in the world, as if they were all mere consumers. Their argument proceeded on the evident fallacy that the agriculturist produced no more than he consumed, which was absurd; and if he did produce more than he consumed, by lowering the price of his product, he must lose upon the larger quantity, and be compensated on the smaller, and must therefore be a loser. The noble Lord, Lord John Russell, had said—

“The great cotton manufactures of this country, the great woollen manufactures, the great linen manufactures of this country, are sent abroad to compete in markets at a great distance from us; they are sent to the markets of America and of Asia to compete with the fabrics of other countries; we therefore want no protection for them in Sussex or in Lincolnshire. If that be the case, and if the great branches of our industry want no protection, they are not benefited by the trifling and the trumpety protection which remains on your Statute-book, and they are not benefited by that protection which seems to give to one particular class of industry an advantage. The great general argument of all writers on political economy with regard to protection applies to each particular class. In the first place, it interferes with the due current of trade on behalf of one particular class; in the next place, it lays a tax upon the rest of the community for the benefit of that particular class; and in the third place, this particular object is not attained, and the very classes it seeks to benefit lose by this pretended protection. Indeed, these propositions have now been so clearly proved, that they have become axioms in political science.”

For these reasons the noble Lord pronounced the Corn Laws unjust. The two first arguments proceeded upon the assumption that protection was effectual in preserving the home market to the home producer, and in thereby raising the price of his produce for his benefit, but to the disadvantage of the consumer. But the

third argument contradicted the two first, and assumed that protection did not, by preserving the home market to the home producer, raise the price to the consumer; but that this was untrue, could not be doubted from the difference of price for corn in this and other countries, and from the payment of a duty sometimes equal to 17s. a quarter. But to refer to the two first arguments, which assumed that protection is effectual, because of its partiality. Now the interests of the producer were here assumed to be antagonistic to those of the consumer; a doubtful hypothesis in a productive country; but the laws, which were for the benefit of the majority, were, he believed, admitted to be for the general good, unless they could be proved to unduly oppress the minority. The question then was, whether the manufacturing or the agricultural interest was the most numerous; for a law which gave protection to a majority, if it did not unduly press on the minority, had always been held to be a good law; and this reduced the question to a comparison of the numbers dependent upon the different interests of this country. Grievous mis-statements had been made, not only in this country, but in foreign nations, on this important subject. As a proof of this, he would refer to the observation of M. Guizot, with reference to Sir R. Peel's measures, that free trade might be justified in a State like England, because the population of that country depended mainly on manufactures and commerce. The right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department had said that this country had become, for good or for evil, a manufacturing and commercial, instead of an agricultural country; and in support of his position he had referred to the Population Returns. This matter had been investigated county by county, after the plan that had been used in every census except the last, in order to find whether the classes dependent upon agriculture really were so few in numbers as they were made to appear in the last census; and the result he would state to the House. Mr. Spackman, the well-known writer on statistics, had analysed the returns, and the details would shortly be given to the world in a work now in the press. It appeared that the occupation abstract of the census of 1841 had been made out in a different form from that of 1831. The return of 1831 was perfectly intelligible, and clearly showed from what sources the different classes drew

their means of support, and upon what interest they depended; but, in 1841, all persons employed in trade, manufactures, and handicraft, were mixed up together, and made to appear as depending on the manufacturing interest; as if the agriculturists needed no shopkeeper to buy his goods from, no handicraftsman to make his implements, and no railways or canals to convey his produce; as if all this traffic, and all these means of conveyance and sources of profit, were dependent on the manufacturing interest alone. It would be seen that while in the census of 1831 the population of the United Kingdom was divided into three classes—namely, agriculturists, manufacturers, and all other individuals, such as persons engaged in retail trades, capitalists and professional men, there were but two divisions in the census of 1841—namely, persons engaged in trade, commerce, and manufactures, who were set down at 2,636,795, and persons engaged in agriculture, who were set down at 1,712,699. Now in that latter return there was a manifest juggle, inasmuch as many of the members of those retail trades which were classed with manufactures depended principally on agriculture for their support. Was it possible, he would ask, that any reliance could be placed on returns based on such a principle? But from the returns which he held in his hand it appeared that in 100 counties and divisions of counties the agriculturists predominated, while the manufacturers predominated in only twenty counties or divisions of counties. It further appeared that the actual number of persons engaged in agriculture was 3,343,974, and that the number of persons actually engaged in manufactures was 1,867,218; and if all the rest of the population were divided in the same proportion, there would be 13,604,915 dependent on agriculture, and 8,009,982 dependent on manufactures; so that the total number of persons engaged in or dependent on agriculture might be taken at 16,948,889, and the total number of persons engaged in or dependent on manufactures might be taken at 9,887,200; showing a majority of 7,071,689 in favour of agriculture. He contended that the improvement of agriculture in this country, unsurpassed in any other country, if anywhere equalled, showed that the Corn Laws had operated to the advantage of the British cultivators, who with their dependents constituted a vast majority of the population. Could it be shown that

the minority—those engaged in manufactures—had been unduly oppressed by these laws? Had no fortunes been made in Manchester? Was Leeds deserted? Was trade unsound in Birmingham? Was it not notorious that the reverse of these suppositions was the fact? He then had a right to assert, that to term protection to agriculture unjust, was to propagate a baseless fallacy. After having trespassed on the attention of the House with these details, he could not help expressing, before he concluded, his deep censure of the change in the policy of Her Majesty's Ministers upon the question. The course they had taken induced him to believe that their recent measures had been long secretly contemplated, and that they had been precipitated by the state of distress in Ireland, and by an uneasy feeling with respect to the trade of the country, a relapse of which he believed would occur, whether these measures passed or not. But it was not of their opinions that he complained; and what he complained of was, that they had so long entertained those opinions unavowed. He could only look upon their present proposals as measures secretly determined on—produced in fear—introduced into that House in arrogance; and he was confident that, if passed, they would result in disaster.

Mr. G. PALMER said, that there was never any measure introduced into the House more deserving their serious attention than the present; but he thought that if every Member were to vote according to his feelings, the result would show a majority of two to one against it. One great advantage which had arisen from this debate was, that it had shown the fallacy of the arguments used by Her Majesty's Government. He must declare, upon the part of the constituency which he represented, that it was not their desire, nor the desire of the agriculturists of his county, to profit at the expense of other interests; but they thought this measure would be against the interests, not only of the agriculturists, but of every one in the country. He believed the returns laid on the Table relative to our trade were not correct; but, admitting their correctness, the large import of our manufactures on the Continent, which they showed, would not compensate for the disadvantages which the measure would entail. If they wanted 2,000,000 quarters of corn, they would have to pay for it in hard gold. As for America, it was every day establishing

manufactures of its own, so that there was no great hope from that quarter. As regarded the currency, they could not issue more than a certain quantity of notes; and if the drain of gold became great, the whole finance of the country might be deranged. He thought the better policy was, that they should mainly trust to themselves for the necessities of life; and he thought we should rue the day when we were dependent upon the foreigner for the supply of the necessities of life. He should be sorry were it supposed by any class, that he or his party was influenced by interested motives; but then it was only fair to consider the burdens which peculiarly affected land. There was not an acre of old cultivated land which was not subject to a charge of 13s. poor rates, highway rates, county rates, and other taxes. It was the small farmers and the labourers who would chiefly suffer by the measure; for the latter were to a great extent dependent on the farmers, and the small farmer could not, like the man of capital, reserve his crops for an advantageous market, but was frequently obliged to sell when there was a glut, and when corn fetched a ruinously low price. Sincerely entertaining these opinions, which had always been held by him, he must vote against a measure which he believed would be detrimental to the general interests of the country. These opinions were entertained by Her Majesty's Government not very long ago; and he had never heard a foreigner speak on this subject who did not say that it was the first duty of a Government to protect the interests of their own country.

CAPTAIN POLHILL thought the small farmers would be injuriously affected by the Government measure; and so strong had been his impression on that subject that he thought it necessary to bring under the notice of the House a clause designed for the relief of those tenant farmers. He was of opinion that if a Select Committee had been appointed, it would have been proved that the tenant farmers would be deeply injured by the passing of this measure. It was his intention to have moved the insertion of the clause he had mentioned; but he had learned from the Speaker that it was not competent for him to do so. He wished it to go forth to the country that he did not shrink from fulfilling his duty; but the rules of that House did not permit his doing so in the manner he wished. He entertained a strong sympathy for the class he had alluded to. The

leading journal of the Empire, in one of its leading articles, did him the honour of combating his proposition; but in doing so used an argument which he thought had rather a tendency to confirm his opposition to the Bill, for it said that if a Committee for the relief of these small farmers were granted, there would be 300,000 applicants. He could not think the extent of the injury would be so great. If he thought 300,000 of his countrymen would be ruined by the measure, he would give 300,000 votes against it, if he had them. He was of opinion that the time was come when this great measure ought to be settled one way or another, for he believed there was a great stagnation in every department of commerce and agriculture from the present state of incertitude. If the Government measure did pass, he trusted that the Anti-Corn-Law League would be at once dissolved. He could not help expressing his admiration at the conduct of the noble Lord the Member for Lynn (Lord G. Bentinck), who although entering into the combat at a great disadvantage, had conducted himself with such ability, prudence, and integrity, as must win for him the attachment of his own party and the respect of his opponents. He had never given a vote in the whole course of his life with more reluctance than the present for the third reading of this Bill; and he did so in order to allay the excitement which prevailed on the subject throughout the country.

MR. BENETT would not address himself to those calculations which had been made as to the relative price of corn in this country and on the Continent, but would confine himself entirely to one point, namely, was the measure calculated to promote the comfort of the great mass of the people? He had always said, that if the abandonment of agriculture altogether and the promotion of manufactures was calculated to benefit the mass, then he would be for the extension of manufactures and the suppression of agriculture. But he believed no such thing, and it was because he consulted the welfare of the greatest number that he opposed the present measure. It was remarkable that the free traders were only free traders in agriculture, not in manufactures; and they argued that the larger was the amount of corn purchased in foreign countries, and by consequence the less it was grown here, the greater would be the export and sale of manufactures. Now, he did not think that the evidence

which had been laid on the Table of that House was calculated to show that those engaged in manufactures were in a very enviable condition. On this point he would refer to an opinion expressed by an hon. Member of that House, one who was known as a very kindhearted man, and one who had formerly advocated the free import of corn. A more kindhearted or a more patriotic man did not exist; he referred to the hon. Member for Liskeard, whose authority he was happy to be able to appeal to in support of this view. On the 27th of March, 1844, the hon. and learned Gentleman said:—

“Millions, he might say, of men had collected together for the first time in certain limited spaces; millions—not skilled artisans, but men carrying on, in their several classes, some one particular branch of industry, which they practised from the first moment at which they could work, till they could work no longer—the great mass of them, in fact, just as unskilled as the rudest agricultural labourer. Thus large masses of unskilled, needy, impoverished labourers were collected together, subjected to terrible privations and discomforts from their very agglomeration; from the same cause almost at the mercy of their employers; and from the same cause ready and apt to combine for mischief. Was this a state of things which Parliament could regard with satisfaction? Was it a good state of things? Was it better for the working people? Was it better for the rest of the community? What was the physical condition of these unfortunate people thus collected together? Was it a satisfactory one? He would not go into any lengthened details, but let him simply ask the House to remember what had been shown to be the comparative duration of life in Manchester, for instance, and in the county of Wilts, an agricultural district. In Wiltshire, the average duration of life was thirty-three years; in Manchester, it was only seventeen. He did not mean to say that this difference in the duration of human life sprang solely or mainly from the nature of factory labour; but it clearly must arise from the circumstances taken all together under which that labour was carried on in the great towns. Now, it could not be doubted that the evils of this physical condition were calculated to grow worse in every succeeding generation. A people whose life was reduced to one-half of the usual average of the labouring class by no accident, no sudden disaster, no chance epidemic, but by the constant action of circumstances unfavourable to health and longevity, were not likely to propagate a vigorous and healthy race. He thought that no Legislature could view with indifference a state of things that thus shortened human life, and tended to deteriorate the species. In some respects, no doubt, the factory labourer was better off than other unskilled labourers. But he did think that there were circumstances in that kind of labour that tended to the injury of health. The mere temperature in which they worked must tend to this result. There were these poor people working for hours and hours together, all day long, in an Indian temperature, and then turned out to go home and sleep in a northern climate. Nor was their social and moral condition at all satis-

factory. No man could venture to say that they were properly educated. No man could say that their religious wants were properly attended to. No man could say that their moral condition was wholesome or natural. The mode of employment was such as to subvert all the ordinary relations of the sexes as to labour; the women and children did the hard work, the men occupied themselves with the household duties.”

Such were the opinions of the hon. Member for Liskeard at the period he mentioned. Now, however, the hon. Member was changed in sentiment, and he could not but feel greatly surprised that he should now be the advocate of a system which perpetuated the evil, and caused destruction to human life. Was it not strange that the average duration of human life should be only seventeen years in Manchester, and thirty-three in Wilts? Could he support a measure which, by fostering the causes tending to depression and degradation of the population, produced the ill of which the hon. Member for Liskeard so feelingly complained? He (Mr. Bennett) had always been desirous of increasing the happiness and comfort of the people; and he would say, that if effects were contrary to what he had shown to be the case of the manufacturing population—if, to be more clear, the duration of life was greater in Manchester than in Wilts, and the present system of poor laws tended to decrease that mortality, most surely would he then change the views he had held so long, and vote for that system which increased life. The right hon. Gentleman (Sir J. Graham) had expressed an opinion last night which narrowed this question to a simple point, and which he had delivered in that House many years before his right hon. Friend had displayed those talents which placed him in his present eminent position—that was, the promotion of the greatest happiness of the mass of the people. Could that be called a happy state in which the average duration of life was seventeen years? He would ask, too, if the misery and destitution detailed in the Reports laid on the Table of the House, exhibited the happiness of a large portion of the community? The deep distress of the labourers in Dorsetshire had been brought before the country. A great fallacy, however, existed on this general subject of distress and prosperity. A prosperous and happy period may be felt in the manufacturing districts, but happiness did not consist in money only. Any man who had lived as long as he had lived, would be well informed, that

seasons of prosperity did not last for ever. Great fortunes were rapidly made by manufacturers; but this could not always follow, and at last, the people would be left to starve, or else depend on the charity of the landowners. He did not find himself equal to enter as fully as others into the intricacies of debate. He was a very old man. For fifty years, at least, he had practically advocated the happiness of the people. He spoke that night, perhaps, for the last time in that House; and he was desirous of knowing from Her Majesty's Government, what was the object of the measure they had introduced, and what was likely to be its result? Did they imagine that this country would go on increasing in population for a thousand years? Were the people to be forced forward to a more excessive competition than they had yet sustained? Was there to be no rest for nations? Was not this country to have any quiet? Were the people to be urged forward with railroad speed, and the Ministers to allow of no cessation? Would such a condition increase the real happiness of the community? He thought not. Manufactures might be increased until England might indeed become the workshop of the world; but would this be happiness? Great Britain was strong in her power and her glory, and, therefore, why not rest? But it appeared no rest was to be allowed. He was of opinion that the increase of trade, when founded on such a reckless principle, could only lead to speculation; and it was dreadful that the Government should not possess the foresight to perceive the end of the system they felt so anxious to extend. When the impoverished condition of the labourer was made the subject matter of debate, why not also bring the state of the Irish labourer into notice? It had been stated that a high remuneration for labour may exist with a low price of corn. This he denied. It was impossible. If the labour market could be regulated, why did not the Government apply themselves to the task in Ireland? Ireland, however, seemed the great difficulty—the Asses' bridge—of the whole work. Here was the finest country in the whole world in the very depths of destitution, and no efforts ever yet made appeared to make any change in the character of its misery. As he before observed, this was probably the last time he should address the House. Allow him to repeat, that the great duty of Governments was the promotion of the greatest happiness of the people; and he

was of opinion that any system which curtailed the duration of human life should not have the support of those who legislate for the country at large.

MR. PLUMPTRE had heard nothing during this lengthened discussion to induce him to alter his opinion of the experiment that the right hon. Baronet proposed to try. The Government were taking a step which, so far from approving, he very much deplored, as being rash and perilous. By the policy they were pursuing, they had divided a great party, who had heretofore given the right hon. Baronet an honest and an independent support. The confidence of that large party was destroyed, the country was thrown into confusion, and how matters were to be settled it would be impossible to predict. He remembered in the year 1835, when the right hon. Baronet sat on the Opposition side of the House, and when the noble Lord the Member for London, who was then Minister of the Crown, had proposed his Tithe Commutation Act, the right hon. Baronet had stated that he would not object to that Act, because he considered that it would provide a due and adequate provision for the clergy. Now, the hon. Member for the North Riding of Yorkshire (Mr. Cayley) had last night delivered a speech which made a deep impression upon him (Mr. Plumptre), in the course of which he stated what his calculations were as to what the price of corn would be if this measure passed into a law. He called upon the House to recollect these calculations, and to consider the situation in which the clergy would be placed if these anticipations were realized. In 1839, the right hon. Baronet objected to the proposition of the noble Lord the Member for London upon this subject, and said that before he attempted to alter the Corn Law by the adoption of a fixed duty, he ought to alter the Tithe Commutation Act; and that he could not consider him an honest man if he did not first propose an alteration of that Act. He called upon the right hon. Baronet to take the same course now himself which he had on a former period so earnestly suggested to the noble Lord. He knew that the proposed measure might work unjustly, cruelly, and prejudicially against the tithepayer; but it would have the effect of robbing the tithe-receiver of one-third, or perhaps one-half of his income. If they took the man with only 300*l.* a year to support himself and his family now, and that this measure, if passed, would reduce this income to

200*l.*, they would be surely inflicting an act of cruel injustice upon him, which they might not afterwards be well able to redress. He would ask them whether they would now consent to alter the Tithe Commutation Act, and thereby place the clergy in that position which the Government pledged themselves they should enjoy; for the right hon. Baronet had himself admitted that they were entitled to due and adequate protection. He entirely concurred in the view taken by the hon. Member who last addressed the House, and which had before been expressed by the right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department, namely, they were bound to consider how they could best promote, to the largest extent, the happiness of the largest mass of the people. If he had not a deep conviction that this measure, instead of effecting that desirable object, would inflict the most serious injury upon the people, he would not continue his opposition to it for a single minute. He believed that they were taking steps which would most seriously affect and injure the domestic happiness of the largest mass of the people of this country. This injury would begin with the agricultural labourer; it would then travel to the small tenant-farmer, from him to the landowners, and from them to the operatives and manufacturers generally. He believed it could not be otherwise; that if they depressed the agricultural interest, every other interest would suffer also. By their present course they were about causing a larger amount of misery than they would ever have it in their power to repair. The party with which he was connected were taunted and ridiculed as hardhearted men, who had no feelings for the poor. He hoped, and trusted, and believed, that they entered as earnestly and sincerely into the comforts of those who were round them as any other class in the country. It was, therefore, because he wished to see the happiness and the comforts of the people increased, that he felt himself called upon to take so determined a stand against this measure. He believed in his conscience that, if passed, it would inflict an injury upon the poorer classes, rather than promote their interests. God forbid that he should have any selfish motives for his conduct in this matter! Upon the grounds he had just stated, he considered it to be his duty to give his most decided opposition to the measure.

MR. HASTIE thought all the arguments

against this measure resolved themselves into apprehensions of a reduction of rents. He believed it might be calculated that the average price of corn for the next ten years would be 15 per cent. less than the price during the last ten years. To ascertain, as far as practicable, how rents would be affected by the reduction of prices, it would be necessary to find the aggregate value of the whole agricultural produce of the kingdom from which rent was derived, and of which corn, including wheat, barley, oats, beans, and peas, formed part. The whole rental of the kingdom was estimated at 59,500,000*l.*; the aggregate value of the agricultural produce of the country was calculated by M'Culloch, in his Statistical Account of the British Empire, at 250,500,000*l.* Of this amount, the portion made up by the price of corn would be reduced 15 per cent. It could not be doubted, though the present Corn Law was, as described by the First Minister of the Crown, a most unjust law, that the landed interest viewed its anticipated repeal with a needless and irrational alarm. In his (Mr. Hastie's) opinion, should the new measure pass to-morrow, there would be no greater reduction in the prices of agricultural produce, or in rentals, than that which he had mentioned.

SIR J. WALSH said, that the House must feel much obliged to the hon. Gentleman for the details which he had furnished, and which they had in vain sought from Her Majesty's Government. The hon. Gentleman was satisfied that the landed interest had no cause for apprehension; he could not undertake to follow the hon. Member, but it seemed to him a strong fact that the reduction in the price of corn would be fifteen per cent., according to the calculation of the hon. Gentleman. The details furnished by his hon. Friend the Member for Somersetshire, had, however, led him to conclude that the reduction would in fact be much greater; and he confessed that he was very much surprised that Her Majesty's Government had not ventured on any predictions of the same kind; but so it was: the Government had not ventured upon any such confident anticipations as the hon. Member; they had not ventured to prophesy what would be the result of their own measure. He had certainly expected from the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State some declaration on that subject last night; but the right hon. Baronet had contented himself with impugning the data of his hon.

Friends, without furnishing any better or more accurate information to the House. When his hon. Friend the Member for Somersetshire had made statements and drawn inferences, which were to his mind very clear and convincing, the right hon. Baronet disposed of them in the same summary way in which he had before dismissed his own opinions, and said, "I don't admit your data." The hon. Gentleman the Vice President of the Board of Trade had, on a former occasion, in a speech which was certainly very comprehensive, since it completed the whole circuit of the globe, endeavoured to show that there was no corn to come into this country from anywhere; but last night the right hon. Baronet had said, that the delay of this measure had caused a vast accumulation of foreign corn in this country, and that in consequence of that delay there was great danger that they might be, by an avalanche, overwhelmed when the flood-gates were opened. That was rather inconsistent with the former argument of the hon. Gentleman the Vice President of the Board of Trade. The delay therefore had, at all events, this good effect—it had removed some of the arguments which, at the commencement of the discussion, were urged in support of this measure. Abstaining, however, from any prediction, the Government had still ventured to anticipate that the reduction in prices would be just enough to benefit the consumer, but not enough to injure the producer. Professing themselves to be in entire darkness as to the results of their own measure, they yet took upon themselves to assume that that golden mean would be attained. But he asked, had those discussions shown that the fears of the landed interest were groundless? Had it not been shown to demonstration, that the ordinary price of wheat in the north of Europe was about 35s., and that protection, by the cost of freight alone, would not be sufficient? It had been placed beyond a doubt that the cost of transmission from the northern parts of Europe to London or Hull was less than that of transmission, inland, from one part of this country to another, though no very great distance apart. He had on a former occasion stated, that in 1843 the freight from Ham-
burgh was 1s. per quarter: that statement had excited considerable surprise, and he had since made inquiries on the subject from an extensive shipowner at Ham-
burgh. The answer of that gentleman, who was a warm free trader, was, that the average

price of wheat, when crops were good and prices were high in England, was 35s.; that when there was no demand for exportation, 30s.; and that upon occasions of sudden demand for French consumption it might advance to 40s. Now, it was to be observed, that all the corn in the north of Europe was sold 5s. a quarter better than the average price in England, so that 5s. must be deducted from that amount. His correspondent also stated that the first freight was 2s. per quarter; but that as the season advanced, vessels might probably be engaged at from 1s. 6d. to 1s. 9d. It was, however, hardly necessary for him to refer to that statement after the ample details laid before the House by the noble Lord the Member for Lynn. There was another argument triumphantly answered by the hon. Member for Shrewsbury, a favourite argument with the supporters of this measure. It was this: that the corn was so distributed that the entrance of England into the market would immediately raise the price all over the world. The answer simply was, that when supply was restricted, a sudden demand of course raised the price; but that the sources of supply being abundant, the effect of steady and constant demand was not to increase, but in the long run to diminish price. That was a doctrine which might be classed amongst those—such favourites with the right hon. Baronet—the doctrines of common sense. It was not to be forgotten that the increased means of transit by railways, for the formation of which the north of Europe was a very favourable country, would open new sources of supply, and afford ready access to the markets of England. With regard to competition, it might be the effect of moderate competition to stimulate; but it was the effect of excessive competition entirely to paralyse. It remained to be seen to what extent the English farmers would be subjected to competition under this Bill. They were told to improve. It was said that there were boundless sources of supply yet untouched, latent mines of wealth yet to be explored; and that if they would exercise industry, talent, and enterprise; if they would discard antiquated modes, and avail themselves of modern science, they would be able to contend on terms of equality with the foreign grower. He fully admitted that there was great room for improvement; that there were many parts of the country in which the effect of improvements had been tested, and much larger districts still

capable of greater improvement; but when they talked of industry, intelligence, and enterprise, hon. Gentlemen omitted one important ingredient of the process—the application of capital. Capital, and very large capital, was absolutely necessary for such improvements. It had been said, that there was no royal road to the knowledge of mathematics; and certainly there was no cheap road to the improvement of land, whether it consisted in draining, subsoiling, embanking, manuring, the making of roads, or any other process: those who engaged in it must be prepared to expend a large capital. Then how was it possible that a Bill, which would expose the farmer to such competition, which would render his profits so much smaller and so uncertain—how, he asked, could such a measure operate as an inducement to the farmer to employ capital in the improvement of his farm? If the farmer held his 1,000*l.* in his hands, he had it safe; but was there anything in their legislation to induce him to part with it? He could only say, that if he were a farmer he should hesitate long before he embarked his money in so hazardous a speculation. The right hon. Baronet had drawn an imaginary line from Southampton to Inverness, and had said that the counties on the east of that line grew nearly all the corn for the consumption of those on the west: they might add to that, that the counties to the east were those in which all the great improvements in the cultivation of land had taken place. The Lothians, Northumberland, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, and Norfolk, had been held up as patterns, and cited as examples for the rest of the country; yet those were the very counties which would be most injured by this measure: those who had laid out their capital, who had ventured to improve their land—those were the men whom they were now about to teach what it was to rely upon the faith of a British Parliament. There was one point so important that it had been touched upon by almost all those who had preceded him in the course of these discussions to which he must refer, he meant the operation of this measure on the wages of labour. The right hon. Gentlemen who supported the measure had started a doctrine perfectly novel and quite inconsistent, as he thought, with the boasted doctrines of free trade. The right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State had stated, that the wages of labour did not depend on the price of food. He could not understand

that doctrine in a country like this; he could understand it perfectly well in a country where labour was scarce, and employers were competing for labour; not of a country like this where the labourers were competing for employment. Let them take the case of America, or the still stronger case of the island of Jamaica. There was no country in which the labourer more easily provided himself with the necessaries of life than in Jamaica—none where the employer was so much dependent on the caprice of the labourer; and there that state of things existed to such an extent that there was no proportion between the wages of labour and the price of provisions. But the case of England was quite different; the case of an old densely peopled country, in which the population had been rapidly increasing, and would increase in a still greater proportion after this measure had passed. The right hon. Baronet had referred to three years' experience on that subject; and the experience of three years had led him into error in that as in other respects. Fluctuations were quite possible; and under the influence of temporary prices, such as the formation of railways, the wages of labour and the price of provisions might not vary together; but the tendency was uniform in a country like this; in the long run the labourer must be dependent on the employer for his wages, and the employer must be able to make his own terms, and to reduce the wages whenever the price of food should permit him to do so. Great complaint had been made, that so much of these discussions had been taken up in recrimination and accusation. He felt that he was not amenable to that charge; but, at the same time, it was a branch of the subject of very great importance; and he could not sit down, although he would avoid even a tinge of that acrimony which had not unnaturally been exhibited by some hon. Members, without expressing his sentiments on that important subject. The right hon. Baronet had thought it necessary to declare, that he had been actuated only by the most disinterested sense of public duty. To him it was not necessary that the right hon. Baronet should make any such assurance. He deplored the policy which the right hon. Baronet had adopted; he considered it a great and grievous error; but he felt the most entire conviction of the purity and integrity of the motives which actuated him. He did not say this for the purpose of interposing a Parliamentary shield, un-

der cover of which he might launch his sarcasms at the right hon. Baronet. He said so simply because he believed it. But while he imputed to the right hon. Baronet nothing more than error of judgment, it was, in his opinion, an enormous error—one of those errors which shipwrecked statesmen, and which shook States. He could not, however, forget what they owed to the right hon. Baronet. He remembered the finances of the country re-established; the credit of the country rescued from insolvency; China pacified, and commercial intercourse placed upon a permanent and satisfactory footing; the settlement of the Maine boundary upon just terms; relations of cordial amity replacing a state of feverish irritation between this country and France; tranquillity at home, except in the unfortunate condition of Ireland; and, of late, our Indian empire confirmed by victories which had decorated the standard of our country with the purest laurels conqueror ever gathered—all these great merits he admitted; but he asked the right hon. Baronet whether to him alone was due all the credit—whether entirely by him these advantages had been achieved—whether they were not ascribable to the efforts of that great party which had placed the right hon. Baronet in power, and enabled him to wield with a firm hand the mighty energies of this great nation. The misfortune of recent events was, that inevitably, necessarily, he had broken the wand, he had destroyed the power which had effected so much good; and so completely destroyed it, that he could not see how it could ever be knit together again. This was surely a high price to pay for a measure of political economy. He deeply regretted that the right hon. Baronet should have taken a course which had created so wide a breach in the great party he had been the means of forming, not only in that House, but in the country; but he was glad to take that opportunity of stating his opinion that the adoption of that course was the result of an error in judgment on the part of the right hon. Gentleman, and one which could only be palliated by the vast amount of service he had previously rendered to the country.

MR. SHARMAN CRAWFORD said, the hon. Gentleman who had last addressed the House founded his arguments against the measure of the Government on the allegation of the immense fall which that measure would produce in agricultural pro-

duce. He (Mr. S. Crawford) wished to remind the hon. Gentleman, and the other hon. Members who took a similar course of argument, that their reasoning operated in two ways. They might show an injury to the agricultural interest by the great fall which would take place in the price of agricultural produce; but they, at the same time, taught the labouring classes the immense injury which had been done to them, and would be done to them, by holding up the price of provisions. It would impress upon that class the feeling which they had already, in a very strong degree, imbibed, that this was a landlord question, and not a question of the nation; and that by keeping up the price of provisions they were endeavouring to support the landed interest to the great injury of the masses of the community. If the hon. Gentleman's argument were correct, that the fall of provisions would be so great, was he not proving, by that very same argument, that the labouring classes would be in as great a degree benefited by that reduction of price? The hon. Gentleman who took that course of argument ought to reflect upon the injury which they might do to the interests of the great aristocracy of this country, by making the people of this country believe that the aristocracy of the country were hostile to their interests? What injury so great could be done to the aristocracy as to raise the opinion in the minds of the people that the aristocracy were the cause of the miseries they suffered? Therefore, he would impress upon those hon. Members that they ought not to rest their arguments in opposition to the measures of the Government on the assumption that the fall of produce would be so great; for the more they based their arguments upon that position, the more anxiety they would create in the minds of the people, that that measure of the Government should become law. The hon. Gentleman talked of the importance of capital. He admitted that importance; but let the hon. Gentleman recollect how capital was created. It was created by the labour of the industrious classes; that labour was the origin of all wealth and prosperity; and therefore those classes were entitled to the highest degree of respect. Would the argument of the hon. Gentleman be an answer to the starving labourer who could not obtain the provision which was necessary for the subsistence of himself and his family? Would such an argument as that raise the aristocracy of England in the

affections of the people? He would say, that the great object of the aristocracy of this country should be to supply the people of England, the mass of the community, with the necessaries of life on the cheapest terms; and every act of legislation which would stand between the people and cheap food, was an injury which the people of England could never forget or forgive. Some hon. Gentlemen talked of the wages of the labourer falling with the price of provisions. That argument had been raised over and over again, and it had been shown over and over again that wages did not fall proportionably with the price of provisions. He would not contend that the price of provisions might not operate in some degree on the rate of wages; but statistical returns proved that wages were higher in proportion when the price of food was lower. Therefore, wages were in a better condition when food was cheap than when it was dear; that had been proved over and over again by information that could not be refuted. The principal reason that had induced him (Mr. Crawford) to rise on this occasion, was to reply to certain arguments that had been reiterated on the opposite side of the House, and answered over and over again with regard to the condition of the people of Ireland. It had been asserted that there was no real distress in Ireland. He (Mr. Crawford) begged leave to contradict that assertion: there was great distress in Ireland. He admitted that, in the most distressed parts of Ireland, the markets did not show that distress in the manner which some persons might expect. In some of the most distressed parts of Ireland, the price of potatoes and provisions had not risen proportionably to that distress. Why had they not risen? Because the people were not in a condition to buy food. The people who depended upon their own produce, being deprived of it, could not go into the market to buy produce; but in the part of Ireland where the people were in a condition to buy produce, as a substitute for the loss of their potatoes, the markets had risen to an intolerable pitch. He would refer, for instance, to the market of Belfast, and to that part of Ireland. In Belfast the market had risen to 5s. and 5s. 8d. per cwt.—a price which should be a starvation price; oats had risen to 10s., and oatmeal had risen to 7s. Within the last few days, a meeting was called in the town of Downpatrick, for the purpose of providing food for the distressed inhabit-

ants; and a resolution was passed, that the unusually high price of potatoes, which was likely to increase during the summer months, was such as to call for public attention. Here was a proof that, in the very best part of Ireland, where labour was best required, the distress was great; and if distress existed in that part of Ireland where people were in so much better a condition than in other parts, what must be the distress in those other parts where neither wages nor employment could be supplied? He would unhesitatingly say, that distress to a vast degree was almost universally prevalent in Ireland; but, at the same time, he admitted that, from the causes he had stated, the markets in some places did not exhibit distress in that degree that might be expected. He (Mr. Crawford) also unhesitatingly stated it to be his opinion, that it was the interest of all classes that cheap food should be supplied to both English and Irish. He agreed with the general feeling of the people, that this could be considered as nothing but a landlord question; and he (Mr. Crawford) felt that the landlords could never have a just security for their existence and prosperity, except it was founded on the prosperity of the people. He (Mr. Crawford) was of opinion there would be no reduction in the price of produce which could not be compensated for by a fair reduction of rents by the landlord. At the same time, he did not expect that a very great reduction of rents would be necessary. He thought the improvements that would be effected in producing agricultural produce would be such as to render very little reduction necessary. As a landlord, he (Mr. Crawford) did not care what the reduction might be that would be necessary. He should not stand against the true interests of the people and the nation; and let the landlords be affected by it as they might, he felt it was his duty to give all the support in his power—not only as an Irish proprietor, but as an English representative—to the measure proposed by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. F. SCOTT said, four months had now elapsed since those measures had been introduced, and he had waited patiently in the expectation that Her Majesty's Ministers would have given some other reason for bringing them into that House, than those which had been successfully combated by those very Gentlemen, when propositions of a similar nature emanated from hon. Gentlemen who usually sat on the

other side of the House. He had expected that some reason would have been given for the change which had come over the minds of those right hon. Gentlemen, and which should induce them to falsify all their professions, to abandon all their former opinions, and cause them to turn renegades to those opinions, the free expression of which had obtained them their seats. He had seen nothing happen during any month of the present year which could induce him to say that the right hon. Gentlemen had been wrong in the whole of their anterior policy upon the Corn Laws. Undoubtedly they had raised the cry of famine in Ireland, knowing well that no Gentleman in that House could hear that cry without feeling a deep sympathy for those who were labouring under the pressure of want; but he did not think that they had successfully proved that ease. Their defence of the measure—a measure which was wholly uncalled for—was full of inconsistencies. They had put it forth, that the supply of grain in this country had been for some years insufficient for the supply of the people. Why, the returns which were on the Table of the House proved that the supply of corn had been fully adequate to feed even our largely increasing population. Then they were told that our acres did not grow with the population. He maintained that in Canada and in Australia our acres grew far faster than the population—those, and other possessions of the Crown, were waiting to pour in their wheat into our markets, while, at the same time, they were ever ready to receive a large supply of our surplus labour. Under the protective system our agriculturists had doubled the produce of the soil. True, the right hon. Secretary for the Home Department said, that under that system wages were low in Dorsetshire; but he knew that in his own county the rate of wages was double what it had been stated to be in Dorset. But if protection lowered wages in Dorsetshire, what was it that raised them in Lincolnshire, and other counties he might name? It was said that protection left barren the downs of Wiltshire; ay, but it drained the fens of Lincolnshire, and fertilised the hills of Scotland. It was said, that protection swelled the pockets of the landlords; and yet those who said this, had stated also that there was no investment which brought so small a return as an investment in land. It was alleged that it interfered with the commerce and interrupted the manufactures of

the country; but when had commerce and manufactures made such rapid strides as in the last fifteen years? When had profits been so great, or when had machinery displaced so much human labour? And, lastly, they were compelled to say, that the protective system rendered prices unsteady. What were the facts? Why, it was proved by returns then on the Table of the House, that in no country in Europe had the price of corn been so steady as in England. How was it possible they could be asked to give their support to a measure which required to be defended by such inconsistent arguments? To defeat the measure, at least to upset all the arguments by which it was supported, it was only necessary to revert to those used by the right hon. Baronets now sitting on the Treasury benches, when they so successfully opposed the continued Motions brought forward by hon. Gentlemen opposite. This question was professed to have been brought forward in consequence of the condition of Ireland. Now, he sympathized deeply with the sufferings of Ireland, as an integral portion of the British Empire; but this measure was calculated to cause increased detriment to that country, and to deprive her of many advantages she now possessed. But they had failed to show any connexion between the disease which afflicted Ireland, and the remedy proposed; for the disease was immediate, and the remedy was remote. How could they maintain, too, protection to the manufacturing interest to the extent of ten or fifteen per cent.; and yet, when husbandry employed more than double the number of people employed in the silk, the linen, the woollen, and the cotton trades, deprive it of all protection at the expiration of three years, and give it a very moderate protection during the continuance of those three years? If protection was bad for any interest, it was bad for all; and all the land asked was, evenhanded justice for all; and that they trusted they should obtain. He knew the agriculturists of this country well, and his belief was, that in no class of the community was there more intelligence; whilst he was persuaded that there were no men more willing to bear their fair share of the public burdens, or to make any sacrifice for the public weal. He believed that when the Government sought to interfere with protection to agriculture, they were about to distort and disable one of the strongest limbs of the State. By the present measure, they were about to fetter agriculture, and mock the

farmer with compensation; and having stripped him naked, expose him to be the laughing-stock of all the world. If they were to have free competition, let them have it free and fair. Let them use malt for the fattening of cattle—let them be free of the malt tax, and let them, without stint, cultivate their land as they liked—let them cultivate tobacco and other productions likely to yield an adequate return to the grower. But then it might be said, “We cannot afford to make so great a sacrifice of revenue.” But the corn-grower was sacrificed all the time, and his interests disregarded. He begged of the Government to make another sacrifice, and render the agriculturist justice for the injustice it had inflicted upon him. The present was not a question of merely landlord and tenant, but a question, and a material question, that affected alike the artificer, the operative, and the manufacturer. These were times of significant moment, when iron, steel, and fire, were taking the place of muscle, bone, and sinew. They were legislating too much for furnaces, and too little for land. They were displacing the labour and the sweat of man’s brow, and replacing it by infant toil and premature decrepitude. The present were not times when a Government ought to take further measures to displace labour, or to adopt any course that might have the effect of reducing agricultural and other labour, by throwing the poorer soils out of cultivation, and thus leaving it to the dictate of the manufacturer to settle what amount of wages it might suit his caprice to give; and also to induce foreign countries to take more of our manufactured goods than they might otherwise be disposed to do. His opinion of free trade had always been an interchange of various commodities, the productions of foreign countries, upon equal terms. But let them contrast Russia, who met us with a hostile tariff, and China, with which we had such extensive mercantile transactions. Much had been said about the expediency of reducing the duty upon all the articles that entered into general consumption, and were to be regarded as necessities of life; but in the calculation of what articles could be styled necessities, he would inquire whether tea was not a necessary article of life. It was quite true it was not an article of universal consumption (he wished it was so); but if the duty of 225 per cent. on the value were taken off, it would be a real boon, productive

of great benefit, and tend to improve the morals and conduce to the comfort of the humbler classes. The reduction of the duty on tea would also tend to the prosperity of our Colonies, as it would undoubtedly cause an increased demand for sugar. But then again, it would be said that the requirements of the State could not afford so great a reduction of revenue as that which would ensue from the total abolition of the duty on tea; and that a measure so likely to be productive of advantage not only to a great class of the community, but to our colonial possessions, could not be carried out. Surely this argument was a proof that this so much talked of “free trade” was a boon to foreign countries, and was calculated to tell against our own Colonies. If free trade were to be introduced at all, let it lean to our own Colonies, and not to aliens and strangers. He should like very much to know how this bastard free trade would affect the Colonies. The success of our colonial possessions, in his opinion, depended to a great extent on the maintenance of protection. Our colonial possessions were the most extensive in the world, and it was a matter of the first importance that they should be bound to us by ties of reciprocal advantages, as well as by international laws. Had Mr. Pitt lived, he would have urged, as that great statesman the elder Mr. Pitt had done, the importance of such a proceeding. What had the latter said, speaking of the Colonies—

“We have bound our Colonies by our laws, our regulations, our trade, our navigation, our manufactures, and every thing; and how can we abandon protection?—I care not whether by a military force, or protection in the every-day transactions between the mother country and the infant State in commerce—but how can we compel obedience if we abandon protection? If the Colonies fall, they will fall like a strong man embracing the pillars of the State, and pulling down in their ruin all constitutional law.”

It was his opinion, that as long as England enjoyed the colonial trade she at present possessed, it would be little short of madness to hazard, by the introduction of such a measure as that now proposed, the connexion between the mother country and her possessions. Let them see what Canada would say: “You impose rules and restrictions on me; you quarter troops upon me, and when I ask leave to send you all I have to send—my wheat and my timber—you reply, the Baltic is near at hand, and we will rather take timber from it; it

is true, you are mild and meek, and the Baltic is unstable, but still we would rather deal with it." Thus it would be with the West Indies, and thus it would be with Australia, which fain would be made the receptacle for the villany of this country, without giving it any countervailing advantages. This would be the feeling which would be excited throughout the Colonies, if a measure tending to withdraw protection received the sanction of the Legislature. If they were resolved to have free trade, let them have free trade with the Colonies, and thus maintain their commercial and maritime superiority to any other nation in the world. He believed the feeling hitherto with respect to the proposed Ministerial measures was, that there had been a gross dereliction of duty on the part of public men, and that a feeling prevailed, that, however desirable a reduction of some duties might be, a total abolition of the duty on foreign corn would be productive of the most disastrous consequences. He also knew it had been said, that oft-repeated professions had been violated—that sacred pledges had been broken—and that confiding constituencies had been betrayed. He also knew that when the husbandman would be thrown out of employment, and the artisan and the operative reduced to distress—that when capital became unproductive, and there would be a necessity for direct taxation—that when those and other ulterior consequences would result, as unquestionably they must—he well knew upon whom the nation would throw the heavy responsibility of a measure carried against the sense, as it was against the interests of the country, by a strange coalition of discordant and distrusting parties.

LORD BROOKE said, he intended to give his vote against the measure of the right hon. Baronet, and he must contend that on the first showing of it the principles involved in it were such as to well warrant the most strenuous opposition on the part of hon. Members in that House. The present measure was proposed as an experiment; but he considered that the Government were not justified in trying experiments which might be attended with the most injurious and disastrous effects. It was an old saying that a man's character might be known from the company with which he associated; and applying this test to the First Lord of the Treasury, with reference to the present measure, he found that his coadjutors in its support in this

country were men of the most extreme opinions; and in Ireland its most strenuous advocates might be found among those who were clamorous for a repeal of the Union. He did not attribute to the right hon. Baronet any sympathy with the extreme opinions of these persons; but he regretted to see the right hon. Gentleman co-operating with such individuals in promoting measures, the success of which they believed would enable them to carry out their own extreme principles. The right hon. Home Secretary had said that one great object of this measure was to prevent fluctuations in price; but between 1770 and 1790, the fluctuations in the price of wheat had been much more considerable than under the present system of Corn Laws. It could not, therefore, be said with justice that the present Corn Laws had been the cause of this fluctuation. He would give his hearty opposition to the Bill, which he believed would most injuriously affect the interests of landlords, tenants, and all persons employed in agricultural pursuits.

CAPTAIN VYSE considered it due to his constituents to give expression to their opinions on this most important question. He must say that his opinion of the fallacy of free-trade principles had been strongly confirmed by the observations which, in the course of this debate, had fallen from several hon. Gentlemen on the opposite side of the House. They had been told by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government that the reason for introducing this measure was the state of Ireland; and he (Captain Vyse) had heard no other reason assigned for its introduction. Now, he believed there were proofs enough, for they had never been answered by Her Majesty's Ministers, that notwithstanding there might be distress in Ireland, that distress did not exist to the extent represented by the Government; and he was at a loss to know how a repeal of the Corn Laws which was not to take effect for three years to come could ameliorate a present pressure in Ireland. That House was now called on to vote for a measure, which no country under heaven had ever thought fit to adopt. They had been told that the people of this country were in favour of free trade; but the soundness of that assertion he begged most distinctly to deny, and he believed that the measure of the Government would be found in operation not only injurious to the agriculturists, but also to the poor man. The country had been deceived, for the Prime Minister, instead of

conducting the Government on the principles which he formerly professed, had changed his policy. But the protectionists, though deserted by the Minister, had still a leader deserving of their confidence; they were not dismayed, but would stick to the last plank until the vessel foundered.

MR. SEYMER wished, as a representative of an agricultural district in this now no longer to be agricultural country, to address a few words to the House. It had been stated by his hon. Colleague in the representation of Dorsetshire, that in those cases where the money wages of the labourers were 7s. a week, the labourer also received an additional allowance, such as house-rent and fuel free; and he estimated the whole actual wages received as amounting to 9s. a week. The right hon. the Home Secretary had, however, misunderstood that statement, and had argued that the money wages being 7s. a week, there were to be deducted from that 1s. 6d. for house-rent, by which the right hon. Gentleman reduced the labourer's wages to 5s. 6d. or 6s. a week. This was a mistake on the part of the right hon. Gentleman, and was contrary to what his hon. Colleague stated, as he (Mr. Seymer), sitting near at the time, could testify to. He did not mean to say that the remuneration of the labourer was as high as he could wish; but he had yet to learn how the measure of the Government could operate as any remedy in reference to low wages. He gave every credit to his hon. Friend the Member for Shaftesbury (Mr. Sheridan) for his exertions in the cause of the labourer; and he was glad that that hon. Gentleman thought that they (the protectionists) did, and would vote with them on this occasion. If he (Mr. Seymer) could agree with the right hon. Baronet the Home Secretary, that the inevitable tendency of low prices would be beneficial to the labourer—if he did not believe that there was a broken link in the argument which the right hon. Gentleman thought so conclusive—if he did not know that in those countries from which cheap corn would come, the condition of the labourer was inferior in every respect to that of the English labourer—he might be induced to vote with the right hon. Gentleman on the present occasion. Having said this much, he would address a few words to those hon. Members upon his side of the House who supported the measure of Her Majesty's Government. It was by the votes of those Gentlemen, the friends of agriculture as he was willing to believe

them, that the present measure must be carried. There had been no great change in the position of political parties in this country. The Anti-Corn-Law League had been remarkably unsuccessful in their elections. The one great exception of which they boasted was mainly to be attributed to the well-deserved popularity of the noble Lord, who on that occasion consented to be their candidate; therefore he contended that if this question was carried at all, it must be carried by the votes of hon. Members on his side of the House, "friends" of agriculture. The question he would ask these hon. Gentlemen was this: would they have supported this measure had it been proposed by the noble Lord the Member for London? Some of them had said they would not have supported him; "but," said they, "we have confidence in the right hon. Baronet, and we have not confidence in the noble Lord." Let the House have a clear understanding upon the principal point of difference between them. When they said they had no personal objection to the noble Lord, he agreed with them there was nothing in his personal character to justify any personal objection. His objections were of a purely political character. The great Conservative party withheld their confidence from the noble Lord, because they differed from his political views, more especially at the last election, because they thought they perceived in his measures a tendency—merely a tendency—to the doctrines of free trade. And were they to support or give their confidence to the right hon. Baronet, when he absolutely proposed this very measure, the mere tendency to which was a reason for their withholding their confidence from the noble Lord? The hon. Gentlemen would perhaps say, "The right hon. Baronet is such a delightful Minister for keeping up the price of the Three per Cents." That might be a very important advantage. He (Mr. Seymer) was afraid country gentlemen were not so much concerned as they wished to be in the doubtless important question; but the political character and consistency of public men were of still greater importance, for unless that were kept up, in the long run they would not be able to keep up the price of the Three per Cents. Having said this much upon the general question of confidence, he would address one or two more interpellations to hon. Gentlemen on his side of the House upon the arguments by which they were enabled to support the right hon. Baronet's measures. One ar-

gument, of great weight, which they used was, that there might be a reduction in price, but that was made up by increased production. He did not know whether hon. Gentlemen were aware, but he believed it to be true, in his neighbourhood at least, that those persons who were good farmers had the most sympathy, but those who were very bad farmers got no sympathy, let them grow as heavy crops of corn as in this uncertain climate it was safe to grow. Hon. Gentlemen would understand him when he said that the heaviest and best crops were most liable to injury from the uncertainty of the climate. During last summer he saw some of the most splendid crops of corn laid flat and rotting upon the ground in a very short time. How were these farmers to be compensated for the loss of price by increased production? And it was this uncertainty which distinguished agriculture so much from manufactures. The manufacturer bought a bale of cotton, he put it into his mill, and he was quite certain it would produce a given number of yards of calico; if he overstocked the market it was his own fault, but his stock would keep good. But what was the case of agriculture? Why, in spite of his farming, and of the expense to which he had gone, all his hopes of a crop were blighted by five hours' rain or wind, and he sighed in vain for a return for his labour and capital. Yet it was said, "You must apply exactly the same principle to agriculture as to manufactures." He did not say this was a proof that different principles should be applied; but it was an *à priori* argument that two lines of business, placed under such different circumstances, should not be legislated for exactly upon the same principles. This uncertainty of agriculture had always appeared to him a justification of that sliding scale which was now abandoned by its author. The sliding scale appeared to him to provide that the farmer should not be ruined by a succession of bad crops and low prices; at the same time it stepped in and said, "You shall not, in consequence of your bad crops, raise the price to such a degree as will injure the consumer." Its operation was to allow foreign corn to come in in proportion to the scarcity. It struck a happy balance between the interests of the home grower and the consumer; and although it had been abandoned by its author, it was upon the whole suited to our condition. On this point he was aware he should be met by the political

economists. It was a great misfortune to the political economists that the discussion of this question had arisen, for they had for some time past been losing ground. Their doctrines, as applied to practical legislation, had been losing ground. The strong hold which they had from ancient habit in that House, was shaken. They had abandoned their principles with regard to mines, railway legislation, and labour in factories; but they were seeking to apply them in all their integrity to corn. Admitting the truth of the doctrines of political economy, (and that was admitting a great deal,) it appeared to him those who held them were not agreed upon their definitions. One man who wrote one book would give one set of definitions, whilst another would give a different set; and they had no agreement. Their terms were not defined, their axioms were not universal, and their elementary propositions were not proved. It was a great question whether their doctrines were applicable to this country. The political economists and the right hon. Baronet, who represented their opinions, said, "The principles of free trade are principles of common sense;" but did "common sense" ever anticipate the case of a nation with a debt of 700 millions, the interest of which common honesty required us to pay? Then they said, "Every country ought to stand upon its natural advantages, and we must have a natural state of trade." What were the natural advantages of England? It possessed abundance of coal and iron, and a temperate, moist climate. There was no room for corn growing here. This, in former days, was the opinion of the political economists, when they did not think their doctrines would ever be brought into practical operation. They used to say this ought not to be a wheat-growing country, the climate and soil not being adapted for it; now, when they were nearer their object, they told us all these free-trade measures were brought forward with the view of doing good to all classes of the community, and the agriculturists among them. He could not help thinking that the language of the right hon. Baronet, with regard to commercial treaties, had of late savoured of the sour grapes. He recollected the time when the right hon. Baronet was most anxious to enter into them; but as soon as he found he could not, he said, "Never mind the exports, but only the imports—the exports will take care of themselves." Were not our mer-

chants and manufacturers better judges than the right hon. Baronet on this subject? Suppose the French conquered Morocco, there was a probability that some new regulations would be made with England with respect to Morocco. What would the merchants and manufacturers do? They would go to the Foreign Office, and beg attention to what was going on. If the principles of free trade were worth anything, it did not signify, so long as we were allowed to import the produce of Morocco, what restrictions the French might introduce into Morocco upon British commerce. As practical men, he begged the House not to be imposed upon by the scientific jargon of the political economists. One other point he wished to touch upon—the prospect of the reduction of wages under a system of free trade. The great argument which was formerly used by the free traders was, “We are now in a critical state of manufacturing industry—the foreigner is running us very hard—we want to get cheap bread in order to lower the cost of production.” What was the meaning of “lowering the cost of production?” Why, lowering wages, to be sure! Now it was said that trade in corn would give a steady export for our manufactures. When we could command the seasons, we should have a steady trade in corn, and not till then. Admitting that the measure of Her Majesty’s Government passed, and that we got our corn from foreign countries, he presumed the trade would follow its natural course, and that those foreigners who could supply us cheapest would supply us to the exclusion of the British agriculturist. It was said that we could not be rendered independent of foreign supplies. He had no objections to a reciprocity with foreign nations; but he thought that when persons said we could not be independent of foreign nations, they forgot the Colonies. He thought that if the Colonies were properly attended to, we might be rendered independent of other countries; and it appeared to him that the right hon. Baronet himself at one time entertained a similar idea, and contemplated a sort of English Zollverein; but that idea had been altogether forgotten. If the pure principles of free trade were established, of what use, he would ask, were our Colonies? In such a case, all that we should require would be a few stations for our shipping; that is to say, in case we retained any commercial marine after such an occurrence. For with such a state of things,

our Colonies would be a useless and expensive burden to the mother country. The next subject to which he should allude, was one that had been very frequently brought forward as bearing upon the question of the Corn Laws—he meant, the failure in the potato crop. He never had underrated the importance of that failure in the potato crop; and in his opinion it had nothing to do with the case of protection. He never thought so, and he never underrated the importance of the failure in the potato crop; and he could add, that he thought the right hon. Baronet was right when he proposed to meet the apprehended scarcity by opening the ports. In his own neighbourhood, potatoes were selling at the usual price; but that fact did not alter his opinion of the proposition of the right hon. Baronet to open the ports; for when he considered the position in which the right hon. Baronet was at that time placed, with accounts constantly reaching him from all parts of Great Britain and Ireland in November last, and having the responsibility of providing food for so many, and of preserving tranquillity in the country, he thought the right hon. Baronet was perfectly justified in the proposition which he made to open the ports, as a preparation against apprehended scarcity from a failure in the potato crops. But if he thought the right hon. Baronet was justified, what was he to think of his Colleagues who overruled him? They must have been in November last strong protectionists—stronger than he (Mr. Seymour) should have been under similar circumstances; and he need not remind the House that those Gentlemen were now the advocates of a total abolition of the Corn Laws after the expiration of three years. He did not mean to impute motives to those Colleagues of the right hon. Baronet: no one would dare to impute unworthy motives to the noble Duke in another place, who approved of that change; but he could not understand their conduct. The right hon. Baronet had expressed his opinion, that if he opened the ports on that occasion, he could not close them again; and in that opinion he thought the right hon. Baronet was wrong. The right hon. Baronet had admitted that changes had taken place in his opinion since his first introduction of the question, and in that respect he illustrated a well-known principle in human nature, according to which persons became attached to that for which they had made sacrifices; and he believed that the sacrifices which

the right hon. Baronet had made with respect to this question, had been greater than was anticipated. He brought forward the measure on the ground of policy; but he found himself opposed by 240 Members of that House, and then he raised it into a question of justice; and if he found hereafter that the opposition to it in another place should be still more determined than that which it had met with in this House, he might raise it, as some reverend orators at Covent Garden Theatre had done, into a religious question. But whatever might be the changes in the views of the right hon. Baronet, the question itself remained the same. It was no more a question of religion or justice now than it was last year. It was a question involving great commercial and social considerations, but was no more a question of justice or religion than the duties on hair powder. Unfair allusion had been made by the hon. the Secretary at War to the speech of the hon. Member for Oxfordshire; but the gist of the hon. Member's statement was, that the prospect of prolonged life was greater in the agricultural than in the manufacturing districts. That was a valuable test of the physical condition of the people. But he would suggest another test, which, from the office which the right hon. Gentleman (Mr. S. Herbert) held, might have some influence with him, namely, the recruiting officer's test. He would not ask from what district the greatest proportion of recruits came; but he would ask if any village in Wiltshire or Dorsetshire could not furnish a greater number of adult males capable of serving in the army, than any population of the same extent in the manufacturing districts? Now, he was strongly of opinion that the duration of life and the capability of serving in the army, formed two excellent tests of the physical condition of a population. In these the agricultural districts had the superiority; and he was of opinion that the comparison would be also favourable to them as regarded the great social advantages. He gave no credit to the farmer in consequence of the employment to which he put his labourers being of a healthy description; nor did he attach blame to the manufacturers because the labour at which their operatives were employed was not so favourable to the duration of human life as that of the agricultural districts; but when the House of Commons was called upon to consider such a question, they had a perfect right to consider the comparative effects of agriculture

and manufactures on the physical condition of the labourers. Assuming that this change was made in deference to the manufacturing interests, he would remark that they were far from being unanimous in its favour. And here he would observe, that as regarded the manufacturing interest, the sooner the question of the Ten Hours' labour was settled the better; for to that measure the great body of the operatives were much attached; and it might be attributed to that very circumstance that so many of them became converted to the principles of free trade in corn. He would tell the House how that change was effected. The operatives got the notion into their heads that many of the agricultural Members in that House had rescinded their votes on the factory question, with the view of keeping in office the right hon. Baronet. While he could not very accurately tell whether the motives attributed by the operatives to such hon. Members were accurate or not, yet he would say that any hon. Member who rescinded his vote on that question, and with such a view, would soon discover that he had committed a most egregious mistake; for the feelings of the manufacturing operatives have been thus more than once expressed: they said, "If the question of the Corn Laws was to stand in the way of the Ten Hours Bill, they would rather throw the Corn Law question overboard, than be deprived of what they esteemed a favourable regulation of labour." That was one great reason why so many of the operatives had fallen in with the cry which was raised against the Corn Laws. He was now drawing nearly to the close of his address, and he sincerely thanked hon. Members for their attention. ["Go on!"] He would, then, detain them on one or two points which appeared to have produced some weight during the discussion. Persons were struck with the statements that had been made, that since the agitation of the Corn Law question, small farms in Scotland had greatly increased in value. He had it in his power to give the true solution of the case. Persons held farms in Scotland for a certain number of years, say for a period of twenty-one years: those individuals possessed not only capital, but they had that skill in the management of their farms which made them most productive; there was also a considerable outlay in the erection of the necessary buildings; in fact, the farms were so greatly improved in every respect, that when at the

expiration of the lease they reverted to the landlord, he had it in his power to re-let them to other farmers of capital and of industry, and at an increased rent; so that if any change of this sort had taken place during the discussions on the measure now before the House, the increased value of the farms was not to be attributed to the introduction of that measure, but it was to be attributed to a circumstance which always existed, namely, the improved condition of the farm and all the appurtenances. Another argument had been urged, that the price of land in the market had not fallen because of the introduction of the Corn Importation Bill. Assuming that to be a fact, yet it would not prove the ease for which it was adduced. But why was the price of land kept up? An individual, suppose a millionaire, lived in the city of London, of whom so very little was known, that had an omnibus prostrated him in the public streets he could not be traced, unless he had his cognomen on a card; but that person wished to be somebody; he could not be so in his own locality—he considers over the matter, and having come to the determination to go down to the country to purchase an estate, he did so, and all at once became a gentleman, a county magistrate, or perhaps a deputy lieutenant. He attends the sessions, presides at grand juries—and thus, in the country, he was found all at once a *novus homo*, an aristocrat. Well, as he must pay for all the advantages, it could not be expected the price of land would fall, such aspirants being the purchasers. It was also to be considered that a vast improvement in the land had taken place, because the farmers were thoroughly convinced in their own minds that the settlement which had been made in the Corn Laws would be lasting and permanent; at least that it would be so for a very considerable period of time. Certainly the poor farmers never thought that those laws would be first disturbed by their own promoters. An improvement also in many places was owing to the praiseworthy exertions of the Royal Agricultural Society of England. But before concluding he must advert to an observation which had been made by the hon. Member for Stockport, who said, that the farmers were all on his side; but how that hon. Member could, after recent elections, make such an observation, he could not well understand. But the observation he intended to retort on the hon. Member was, that the farmers,

to convince the landlords, should toss them all in a blanket. He was sure the answer of the farmers to that appeal would be the expression of their assurance that it would afford them great gratification to associate the hon. Member in the operation. But he would hurry to a conclusion—as he was not vain enough to think that any argument he could advance would produce its due influence; what he had stated, however, ought, in his opinion, to convince any reflecting mind that there were just, strong, and cogent reasons to withhold all assent from that fatal measure which had been introduced by Her Majesty's Government.

Debate again adjourned.

House adjourned at half-past Twelve.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Thursday, May 14, 1846.

THE CORN LAWS—MOTION OF LORD STANLEY FOR CERTAIN RETURNS.

LORD STANLEY said, that he wished to ask his noble Friend at the head of the Board of Trade whether he would have any objection to continue certain returns which had already been presented to the House on this subject. The first was a return of the amount of grain imported from Ireland into Great Britain in the month of February last. Now, he (Lord Stanley) wished to test the accuracy of the statements which were made with respect to the famine which was said to prevail at the present moment in Ireland; and, therefore, he was desirous of having the return continued, so as to show the amount of oats and oatmeal imported from Ireland into England in the months of March and April last. His noble Friend had also laid on the Table various returns relative to the number of corn-laden ships which had cleared out from the different ports of Europe and America during the year 1845. Those returns gave this result—that of the corn-laden ships cleared out, 1,034 were British, upwards of 800 foreign; and 180 which were included in the first were cleared out from ports in our Colonies. The return which he now wished to have was one to show the number of ships cleared out, laden with corn, from all the ports of the different countries of Europe and America during the last year; specifying, with regard to each of those countries,

the proportion of British ships, the proportion of ships belonging to the country from which the shipment was made, and the proportion of ships belonging to foreign countries. To these returns he did not apprehend there could be the slightest objection. There was another matter which he wished to mention. Two returns, numbered 61 and 100 respectively, had been laid on the Table, giving the yearly average prices of wheat in 1845; one of these returns gave it at 50s. 10d., and the other at 55s. 10d. Now, it was very important that they should not have conflicting statements on a point so material as the average price of wheat during the year 1845; and, therefore, he hoped that his noble Friend would be able to give some explanation on the subject.

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE said, that he had no objection to furnish the returns moved for by his noble Friend. With regard to the discrepancy mentioned by his noble Friend, he would merely say, that he had made inquiry, and that he found that the return numbered 61, which proceeded from the corn department of the Board of Trade, and which stated the average price at 50s. 10d., was the correct return. The other return proceeded from the Customs' department; but how the error originated he had not yet had the opportunity of ascertaining. He could not say whether it was the error of that department, or of the printer.

Returns ordered.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Friday, May 15, 1846.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL—THIRD READING.—THIRD NIGHT.

The Motion for the Adjourned Debate having been read,

MR. COLQUHOUN said, after the full discussion the subject had received, he was aware he could add nothing new to the arguments advanced against the measure by his hon. Friends. He feared, however, that those arguments, able and powerful as they were, would not succeed in changing the resolution of the House. Though he could not alter the decision, still he was entitled to appeal to the House to consider whether the great change would really be

advantageous to the country. The noble Lord the Member for Lynn had asked the right hon. Baronet as to the probable decrease of price which would be caused by the measure now under consideration; and the right hon. Baronet said he was not prepared to say that the price of wheat would fall lower than 35s. [Sir R. PEEL intimated his dissent.] Well, the right hon. Baronet was represented as having made that statement. The right hon. Baronet had referred to the year 1835, when the price of wheat was 39s. 4d.

SIR R. PEEL: I beg leave to tell the hon. Gentleman what I did say. I was asked what I thought would have been the price of corn in 1835, supposing a free trade in grain had then existed. I said, "I am not prepared to admit that, supposing for some years preceding there had been a free trade in grain, corn would have been below 39s. 4d."

MR. COLQUHOUN: It was, then, quite evident that the right hon. Baronet apprehended that the price of wheat under a system of free trade might fall as low as it was in 1835. But the circular of the Anti-Corn-Law League stated that wheat would be laid down at the doors of the manufacturers at 30s. per quarter. These statements had caused the prevailing opinion of the country—for he admitted that it was the prevailing opinion—in favour of free trade; but if these statements were true, he contended, that from such a state of things great suffering and misery must necessarily be caused in this country. Take the years 1835 and 1836, in which the prices of corn had been at the low prices likely to be prevalent under a system of free trade. The historian of those years was Mr. Wilson, the Chairman of the Anti-Corn-Law League. [Mr. COBDEN: No; it is another Mr. Wilson who is Chairman of the League.] He was sure, however, that the hon. Member for Stockport would admit the talents of Mr. James Wilson, who was an advocate of the opinions entertained by the hon. Member himself, and would willingly accept his description of the effects produced by the low prices of those years. Well then, Mr. Wilson had said that in those years there had been great agricultural depression, great manufacturing prosperity for a time, fearful and unnatural competition as the consequence of such prosperity—and then the reaction of misery and distress. Such, too, would be the effects produced by the low prices of free trade. [Sir JAMES

GRAHAM: Hear, hear!] The right hon. Baronet cheered ironically, and by that cheer, he meant to say, that prices under free trade would not be low. But the right hon. Baronet must take one line of argument or the other. If prices were not low, if bread were not cheap, where was the benefit of this measure? Where was the good conferred upon the poor man? Where was the fulfilment of the hopes and prophecies, and promises of the League? It had been said that although there might be no fall in prices, there would be stability—that prices would be firm, that trade would be regular, and that a guarantee would exist against the high prices under which the country had suffered. Now, he believed that hope to be perfectly visionary, and that stability of price would be the last thing to expect from the repeal of the Corn Laws. And he would state the grounds on which he had formed that opinion. The average importation of wheat was now rather more than 1,000,000 quarters. He would assume the average importation in future to be 4,000,000 quarters, as the ordinary supply. The average produce of wheat in this country was 16,000,000 quarters, and the 4,000,000 quarters of foreign corn added to that would make, altogether, a regular supply of 20,000,000 quarters. What was the experience of former years? Mr. Tooke, the able statish, a gentleman of great mercantile experience, said that the harvest of 1834 was a harvest in excess over the ordinary harvest to the extent of one-fourth, and that was the cause of the low price in 1835. In 1838, according to the same authority, the harvest was deficient to the extent of one-fourth. Now, supposing the average to be 20,000,000 quarters, and there should be an excess of one-fourth, the supply would amount to 25,000,000 quarters, because the same causes which affected the harvest in this country would affect the harvests on the shores of the Baltic. Now, a supply of 25,000,000 quarters, instead of 20,000,000 quarters, must depress the price most enormously; and in 1854, if the same causes should coincide in favour of an extraordinary harvest, prices would be depressed in a ruinous degree. The same thing would happen which happened in 1834. The farmers would be restricting the cultivation of wheat; the farmer abroad would also diminish his cultivation, and then, in the following year, there would be a restricted supply. Then, if there should be a deficient harvest, as in 1838, the prices would

advance as enormously as they did at that time. The oscillation would be very great, and the prices would be ruinous to the farmer at one time, and at another ruinous to the manufacturer and the labourer. When it was said that if more corn was brought in it would be advantageous to the labourer, he begged to ask what had been the result since the beginning of the present century? Was he better off with an ample supply of corn than he was twenty years ago? If there was more corn there were more mouths, the population would be increased, and the proportion and distribution would be the same as at present, and wages would undergo no alteration. The right hon. Baronet (Sir. R. Peel) had made some remarks that were not quite fair considering the position he had long occupied with respect to the agricultural interest; he said that agriculture had not thriven under the old system. No one could doubt that agriculture had improved in this country more than anywhere, and at this moment we occupied a position in that respect higher than any other country in the world except Belgium. This country fed a larger number of mouths per square mile than any country in Europe, except Belgium, and that from its own soil. In France the number was 150 per square mile; in England 230. In France 14 bushels were grown on the acre, in England 28. And while in France the prices of meal and grain had been steadier, the price of grain in this country had been gradually declining for the last thirty years. If the right hon. Baronet considered it right to change the present system, let him not do it by maligning the agriculture of the country. There was no country in the world which presented such an amount of capital invested in agriculture, and which exhibited such an extent of continued and patient industry. But it was said the alteration in the Corn Laws would produce a wonderful improvement in trade, and that our manufactures would obtain a greater development than ever. Now, let him call the attention of the House to the actual fact. Since the year 1815 nearly 8,000,000 had been added to the population of the country; and on the lowest scale of estimate our manufacturing produce must have increased at the rate of 64,000,000*l.* a year. The agricultural industry of the country had supplied the home market, and it was that on which the manufactures mainly depended. But it was said that the great advantage was to

arise from the foreign market. In 1815, the exports were 52,000,000*l.*, and last year they were only 58,000,000*l.* He was aware that the bulk of the manufactures had greatly increased since the former period; and that the shipping and other interests had been consequently benefited, but there had not been proportionate benefit to the labourer. He would ask, also, how much our Colonies had contributed to that increase in the value of goods sent abroad. The colonial trade was now about 14,000,000*l.* a year, and had nearly trebled in amount since the end of the war. What would be the effect of the present measure on the colonial interest? Did the manufacturers expect that the colonial markets would be in the same position after the passing of the present measure as they now were? Did they think that they would still continue to have in the West India and Canada markets a protective duty of 15 per cent.? [Mr. COBDEN: No!] The hon. Member for Stockport said no. What, then, would be the consequence? Mr. Greg, in speaking the other day on the subject, stated that the cottons of the United States were running those of this country very hard in the market of Brazil; and what would be the result of a similar competition in the markets of the West Indies and North America? Would not the loss to the manufacturer be much greater than anything he could gain by the present measure, if he were driven out of the colonial markets by the cheap and heavy cottons of the United States? There had been many prophecies on this subject, and he would venture to prophesy that the manufacturers would be disappointed if they expected any great increase of their exports to foreign countries in consequence of this measure. The hon. and learned Member for Bath last night ridiculed the statement of the noble Lord the Member for Lynn as to our trade with Canada. The hon. and learned Gentleman stated that the greater part of our exports to Canada went to the United States; but the hon. and learned Gentleman did not seem to be aware that a large portion of the exports of this country to New York were intended for the Canadas, and he had every reason to believe that the noble Lord had correctly estimated the value of our trade with Canada at 3,000,000*l.* He feared that that trade would be greatly shaken by the present measure, and that the bond of interest between the Colony and the mother country might be weakened. At present the

United States imposed a heavy duty on the corn and timber of Canada; but these duties would be abolished were Canada to become a part of the American Union; and such a consideration would no doubt be a great temptation to the colonists to take that step. His fears of the effects of the present measure might be greater than the result would justify; but he was certain that the hopes of the hon. Gentlemen opposite regarding the benefits that would flow from the measure, were visionary in the extreme. There was one class of effects, however, which would remain—the political effects which the measure had already occasioned. These effects were patent and known to them all. There was the severance of a great party of old associations, of himself and his hon. Friends from leaders whom they had long willingly followed. The combination of a great party had been broken up, and he did not think it likely that it would be restored. It was not, in his opinion, desirable for the public interest or useful for the country that the combination should be restored. It would be injurious to the character of statesmen and to those great institutions which they wished to preserve. He knew that he was now touching on delicate ground. The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government had spoken with some asperity of some of his former friends; and though he had no desire to make an attack on the right hon. Gentleman, he hoped the right hon. Gentleman would not complain of him if he were to exercise the privilege which he possessed as an independent Member, and criticised the public conduct of the Minister. No man more admired the talents of the right hon. Baronet than he did; and he would admit that it would be a very great loss to the country to be deprived of talents and services which in the eyes of many were inestimable. If the right hon. Baronet had only continued to maintain what they thought to be great principles and great institutions, he knew that the right hon. Gentleman would have been most cheerfully followed and cordially supported by his hon. Friends around him. But notwithstanding all the right hon. Gentleman's eminent talents and the integrity of his motives, the right hon. Gentleman must allow him to say that there were two blemishes in his public character, which were very injurious to the public in the times in which he was placed. The right hon. Gentleman wanted faith in his own principles, and had too

great a dread of his opponents. These were his two defects. The right hon. Gentleman always appeared to hold his principles loosely—to be riding at a single anchor. At the first appearance of a storm on the horizon, the right hon. Gentleman goes to sea, and not only goes to sea, but throws overboard, as the storm increases, the whole cargo of his life. Allusion had been made the other night to the expectation which had been expressed out of doors, that the right hon. Gentleman might yet bring in a measure for the Repeal of the Union; and he must say, that if the principles of hon. Gentlemen opposite were advocated with ability and perseverance, and with an earnest, conscientious, fervent appeal to the country—if hon. Members appealed to this country earnestly, ably, and successfully—to the extent, he meant, of gaining a great amount of popular support—then he did not know the institution or the principle which the right hon. Gentleman would not, under a certain pressure, abandon. The aristocracy—the Church—that education which made a people great because it made them good—all those things which to them (the Conservatives) were cardinal principles, which they could not and would not consent to sacrifice—all those principles and institutions which the right hon. Baronet had supported during the last three years—years of experience to him and to them—there was not one of them, if there was only produced a sufficient amount of popular pressure, of ability, and of actual fervent impression on the public mind, that the right hon. Baronet would not let go; and there was not one of them with regard to which the right hon. Gentleman would not give the most elaborate reasons for abandoning. He had said, that even while urging the case of the Corn Laws, he felt that the cause was one quite untenable. How long that secret might have existed in the breast of his right hon. Friend, or in that of the right hon. Baronet (Sir J. Graham), he did not know; but he asked every man who had jealously and narrowly watched the actions of public men, if there was a single principle which the right hon. Gentleman had determined to persevere in, which, under the influence of popular excitement, he would not abandon. Although such was his opinion of the conduct and character of the right hon. Baronet, he would not have the House infer that he had, politically speaking, the slightest confidence in the noble Lord op-

posite. He admired the noble Lord's talents and respected his character; but he did not think that either he or his friends could be induced to become followers of the noble Lord, especially in combination with the party who now supported him. The noble Lord was, without question, an able and a gallant captain; and he could perfectly understand the feelings of confidence and admiration with which his friends regarded him; because he had seen the noble Lord in stormy times, when his Administration was nearly wrecked, assume a gallant bearing, and always most chivalrous and most eloquent in times of the greatest danger and distress. Had he shared the opinions of the noble Lord, he should have been delighted to serve under such a leader; but he must say that he should have always felt, as he remembered having once felt at Calais, when storm-stayed and impatient to reach his own country. He remembered pressing a weather-beaten captain to put to sea; and he recollected his answer was, "You are a landsman, and, like all landsmen, very ignorant. This is not weather or a sea in which a ship can live." Now, he thought the noble Lord was just the man to leave the harbour when wiser or more prudent commanders would keep the port. When there was great risk and great danger, it was proper to remain on shore, and not put to sea; but the noble Lord would for an inadequate object leave a safe haven, and brave the storms of the political ocean; and, therefore, however much he admired the noble Lord, he felt it would be the duty of himself and his friends, should the noble Lord move to that side, to continue the same opposition to his Government as formerly. Yet he would much rather have the noble Lord on that side than fight in a camp where the leader, the moment the guns of the enemy commenced to play, began to spike his own, and offered terms of surrender. He thought this a most anomalous and dangerous condition of public affairs; and he must avow his conviction that the sooner it came to an end the better. Much better with the noble Lord and his associates making their honest, bold, open attacks against the principles and institutions which they had been accustomed to cherish, than seeing those principles abandoned, and those institutions undermined, by Gentlemen whose talents they admired, but in whose courage they had lost all confidence. Much better, that they should, however

weakened, however deprived of their ablest leaders, meet the opponents of their views, and, as they thought, of the Constitution also, on fair terms on the floor of that House, than expose themselves to a condition of affairs, which was painful to the feelings of all, and most injurious to the interests of the country; and he took leave to say to the hon. Member for Stockport, who had said he and his Friends would meet them with the skeleton of the Anti-Corn-Law League—[Mr. CORDEN: The ghost]—well, the ghost of the League—he ventured to tell the hon. Gentleman, that, whatever respect they might have for his talents, they could never coincide in his views. He thought his Friends had fought this battle gallantly and with singular ability, and the more they engaged in this war the more experience would they gain. Whether on the hustings or in the counties, where the hon. Member for Stockport said he reigned supreme in the affections of the farmers, or whether in the borough towns, where he considered himself still more triumphant—in all these sufficient opportunity would be given to meet them with courage, and, he hoped, with success. And if they were worsted, as he thought was very likely in the present fight here, still they would, in defence of the great institutions of the country, carry on a gallant, and, he hoped, ultimately, successful warfare; for though great excitement now prevailed, and was in favour of these measures—[“No, no!”]—at all events a great portion of the present excitement was in favour of the Government—that excitement would, however, pass away; and when the promises of the hon. Gentlemen opposite were found not to be realized—when the promises they had made to the merchants, the manufacturers, and the labourers were not fulfilled in the increase of trade and manufactures—when all the hopes they had held out were proved to be visionary and fallacious, then would they (the protectionists) appeal to the people of England with this simple question, “Who, in the hour and crisis of difficulty, were your subtle but faithless counsellors, and who your humble but consistent friends?”

MR. C. WOOD said, he had hoped that at this period of the debate they should have heard the last of the personal attacks which had come from hon. Gentlemen opposite. He thought that the party to whom the hon. Gentleman who had just sat down belonged, might fairly claim the

praise which the hon. Member had bestowed on the noble Lord the Member for London, namely, that the worse their position was, the more gallantry they displayed in defending it; but he thought, also, that the hon. Member might have found, in the nature of the position which they occupied, some reasonable grounds for doubting the soundness of the opinions which were held by its defenders. On this subject, however, he would say no more, because he was anxious, during the very short time in which he should detain the House, to state the main grounds on which he supported this measure. He pleaded guilty to the charge of being one of those who, without the experience of the last three years, and even without the experience of many years before, had arrived at the opinion that a protective system of Corn Laws was inexpedient and unjust. Long before this question assumed its present aspect—long before that body to whom so much credit was due for their exertions had organized the means for obtaining a repeal of the Corn Laws, he had expressed his opinion to his constituents, that the landlords of England had no right to protection. He never had wavered in his opinion, that a system of laws for enhancing the price of food for the benefit of the producer was inexpedient and unjust. He must say, that the main reason which he had for supporting the present measure, was the effect which the maintenance of the Corn Laws had on the labouring population. He had, indeed, thought, until the other night, that the commercial advantages of the repeal of the Corn Laws were undoubted and undisputed. That point, however, had been questioned the other night by the hon. Member for Shrewsbury. He (Mr. C. Wood) did not think that the House was a good arena for a discussion on the principles of political economy. He would, however, call the attention of the hon. Member to this remarkable fact, that for years back there had been an extraordinary importation of corn at a very low duty, coincident with an extraordinary importation of bullion. That was a perfect contradiction to the theory of the hon. Member for Shrewsbury. At the end of the year 1838, the gold in the Bank of England amounted to 9,726,000*l*. In the course of the year following, 3,110,000 quarters of wheat were introduced into the country; and there was left at the end of the year 1839 only 3,934,000*l*. of bullion in the Bank. In the year 1840, 2,910,000

quarters of wheat were imported; and at the end of the year the amount of bullion in the Bank was 4,029,000*l.* In 1841, 2,910,000 quarters of wheat were introduced into the country; and at the end of the year the bullion rose to 5,031,000*l.* In 1842, the quantity of wheat imported was 3,110,000 quarters, and at the end of that year the quantity of bullion in the Bank rose from 5,000,000*l.* to 10,510,000*l.* In the two years 1843 and 1844, there were imported 3,246,000 quarters of wheat, and the bullion rose to 14,450,000*l.* That was perfectly inconsistent with the fact that a permanent import of corn from foreign countries led to a permanent drain of gold. That it would, in the first instance, lead to a drain of gold everybody admitted, but not permanently. In the interval between 1839 and 1844 the bullion, as he had shown, had increased from 4,000,000*l.* to 14,500,000*l.*, whilst, during the same period, a most extraordinary importation of corn took place, and chiefly from countries which protected themselves from the import of our goods by hostile tariffs. So much, therefore, for the argument of the hon. Member for Shrewsbury. The main ground, however, on which he (Mr. C. Wood) rested his vote for the measure was the benefit which he believed would be derived by the labourer from the abolition of the Corn Laws. No Gentleman on either side of the House had stated the full amount to which the benefit which the labourer would derive from the repeal of the Corn Laws would go. Now, he did not mean to say that hon. Members on his (Mr. C. Wood's) own side of the House alone stood up for the rights of labour. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury put the question the other day, and very fairly, upon this footing, namely, was this a measure which would be prejudicial to the labourer? The hon. Member's argument was, that there would be a great displacement of labour in consequence of the repeal of the Corn Laws. The hon. Member contended that the agricultural labourer would be reduced to great distress, and that, although corn might be low in price, he would not have money to purchase it. But the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyne had stated a fact in the course of his speech which showed that the contrary would be the case. That hon. Member had stated, that there had been a great improvement in agriculture during the last thirty years, and that this had taken place in the face of the falling price of corn. If,

therefore, the price of corn fell in consequence of the passing of this Bill, it would not prevent improvements in agriculture. On the contrary, he believed that they would be more indispensably necessary. Now, improvements in agriculture gave greater employment to labour even for the production of green food; he had heard many hon. Gentlemen say that the best system of farming consisted in having a rotation of crops instead of keeping lands in pasture, and that this was the system which gave the largest amount of employment to the labourer. He (Mr. C. Wood) did not anticipate, therefore, the slightest diminution of employment for the agricultural labourer consequent upon the change of the Corn Laws. The only other argument was, that as the wages of the labourer were regulated by the price of agricultural produce, the price of food was of no consequence to him. He would not go into a discussion upon the principles of political economy, or allude to Adam Smith. He would appeal to the experience of all persons who were conversant with agricultural affairs. He was ready to admit that with regard to some portion of the agricultural labourers under the old Poor Law, there had been some approximation to the principle which it was contended regulated the price of wages. When wages were paid, not according to the amount of labour performed, but according to the number of persons in a family, and so much bread was given per head, the labourer had what he should rather call an allowance than wages. He would, however, refer to what had actually been, a short time ago, the rate of wages as compared with the price of corn in this country. In 1835 corn was under 40*s.* the quarter, and in 1839 the average price was above 70*s.* the quarter. Now what were the wages in the south of England in the first of these years? Taking them to have been 8*s.* per week in 1835, they ought to have been 14*s.* a week in 1839, to have enabled the labourer to purchase the same quantity of bread. Unless the labourer had those increased wages, he would not have been in 1839 in the same relative position as he was in 1835. Would any Gentleman connected with the south of England tell him that in 1839 the labourer's wages were 14*s.* a week? Would they even say that that sum was even approached? He believed the price of wheat was now between 50*s.* and 60*s.*, but he would take it at 50*s.* a

quarter. The price being 40s. in 1835, and the wages 8s. a week, the labourer ought now to have 10s. a week wages; but were these the wages that were now given in Dorsetshire? It was well known that they were not. Wages, therefore, did not vary with the price of corn, and consequently a measure which prevented a rise in the price of corn was a great advantage to the agricultural labourer. He would now turn to the manufacturing labourer. There were those who said that whenever the price of food was low, wages were high in the manufacturing districts. He would not take upon himself to say that this was the case; but it certainly was true that of late years they had been remarkably coincident. He did not mean to say whether these things bore the relation of cause and effect or not; but certainly for the last few years the labourer, when corn was low, had a greater command of the necessities of life. Now, he would take the same two years to which he had referred before—the years 1835 and 1839. In 1839 the price of corn rose 75 per cent., as compared with the former year. Now, in the borough which he (Mr. C. Wood) had the honour to represent between the same two years, the rate of wages fell 25 per cent., while the price of wheat rose 75 per cent. This, it was evident, made a difference to the poor man in the necessities of life, of not less than 100 per cent. That made a very material alteration in the condition of the labouring man. He might move to an inferior house, he might wear worse clothes, he might give up the use of animal food; but what he could not give up without introducing disease and starvation into his family was bread. Now, he (Mr. C. Wood) wished to place before the House a statement showing to what a great extent the comforts of the labourer did depend upon the price of wheat. The usual assumption was, that every person consumed a quarter of wheat per annum; it was also the usual assumption that a family averaged five persons. The consequence would be that the ordinary consumption of a family would be an average of five quarters of wheat per annum. Now, he would take a labouring family consisting of five persons, whose average earnings amounted to 11. a week. In the year 1835, therefore, that family would have earned 521., and they would have had to have paid for their five quarters of wheat 101., leaving them a balance for other purposes of 421. In 1839, wages

having fallen 25 per cent. in the interim, the wages of this family would be 391., and the price of five quarters of wheat would be 171. 10s., so that, deducting 171. 10s. from 391., the amount of their earnings for that year, instead of a balance of 421. for the purchase of other necessities, they would have only 211. 10s., whereby his income would be reduced rather more than one-half. He (Mr. C. Wood) had assumed that this family had been in the receipt of 11. a week in 1835, and in doing so he had taken the higher description of labourer; but of course the lower the labourer was in the social scale, the heavier was the effect of the price of wheat upon his condition. Now, assuming that a family earned in 1835 401. per annum, in 1839 their wages would have amounted to 301., and the cost of five quarters of wheat being 171. 10s., only 121. 10s. would be left for the purchase of other necessities. Taking a case where a family earned still less wages, 10s. a week (which was 261. a year), in 1835, their earnings in 1839 would be 191. 10s., and the price of five quarters of wheat being 171. 10s., they would only have 21. to pay for rent, clothes, and other necessities. He did not mean to say that this was a state of things that could continue to exist, because it was clear that such a family must have deprived themselves of a very large portion of the ordinary food on which they lived before they could reach that point of destitution. Before, therefore, hon. Gentlemen talked of keeping up the price of corn, it would be well for them to consider what must be the effect upon the comforts of the labourers. The hon. Member for Somersetshire had spoken of the great distress that must fall on landlords in consequence of reducing the price of agricultural produce; but it should be remembered that precisely in the proportion that they would lose hereafter, the labouring poor lost now. They had heard a good deal in reference to the social condition of the people, of some being too rich, and others too poor. He thought this dangerous language, as, unexplained, it seemed to imply that the riches on the one hand arose from the poverty on the other. This was not true generally, as nothing tended more to give employment to the labourer, and go to improve his condition, than the accumulation of capital in the hands of the employers of labour. There was, however, one case in which this was true, and that was when the increased

rents of the landlords arose from enhancing the price of corn, and thereby depressing the condition of the labourer. In this manner the evil so denounced existed in its worst form; and he warned those whose warm interest in the state of the poor he did not for one moment doubt, against continuing the evil, which they, as well as himself, so much deprecated. He individually did not believe that any such loss as was anticipated, would be entailed on the landlords of England. He did not anticipate such a fall in the prices of food as had been expected. The results both for good and evil of the measure had, he believed, been much exaggerated by partisans on both sides. For his own part, he believed that the energies of the farmer would be able to cope with all competition to which he would be exposed; while the increase of produce would more than make up for the diminished prices which might be anticipated. But whatever sacrifices a change in the existing system might entail upon landowners, he, as one of that class, hoped and believed that they would think of the interests of the poor, as paramount to every other consideration.

MR. PHILIP BENNET said, he wished to take that opportunity of referring to a statement of the right hon. Baronet at the head of Her Majesty's Government, which coming from such a quarter was likely to have a mischievous tendency, in exciting the agricultural labourers against their employers. If he did not mistake the right hon. Gentleman, he stated that the price of wheat had no effect on the price of wages, or, if any, acted inversely. Now he (Mr. Bennet) could not answer for the manufacturers, who amassed large fortunes most rapidly, whether they allowed their operatives to share in their profits; but as West Suffolk had been named by the right hon. Baronet, he should confine himself to that point, and although condemning the present measure of Government as likely to bring ruin on all the best interests of the country, labour being a component part of the value of wheat, he considered that the probable reduction of the price of wheat would reduce the price of wages, as all practical men assured him of the fact that they varied the wages with the price of their produce. He did think that every person employed in the agricultural district in which he lived, would look upon them as doing an act of the greatest injustice, if when the price of

corn rose, they did not allow the labourer to reap the advantage. He had taken every opportunity when in the country to ask persons whose experience was great, whether wages did not rise in proportion to the rise in the price of corn; and in reply he had been asked, "Can any person be so foolish as to suppose that we do not vary our wages with the price of corn? The moment wheat rises we raise the wages, and when it falls wages fall with it, and it is only right it should be so." He had heard this in an agricultural district. He would state the exact rate of wages which had been paid by an extensive farmer in his county. This was a statement of what that farmer had received for wheat in his farming book, and the wages he paid his labourers. The rate of wages might appear low, and he wished they had been higher; but they were paid for day work, which hon. Members were aware was far different to the payment for piece work. In the year 1834, when this farmer was paid 2*l.* 12*s.* 10*d.* per quarter for wheat, the labourer received 9*s.* a week. In 1835, when it was 47*s.* per quarter, the wages were then reduced to 8*s.* a week. In 1836, when wheat was 35*s.*, the wages were still 8*s.* In 1837 his wheat was 2*l.* 16*s.* 2*d.* per quarter, and he then paid 9*s.* per week for wages. In 1838 wheat was 2*l.* 18*s.*, and he paid 9*s.* per week; but the latter part of that year the price rose, and the labourers were paid 10*s.* In 1839 the price was 2*l.* 12*s.* 8*d.* per quarter, and the wages 10*s.* a week. In 1840 wheat was 3*l.* 2*s.*, and the wages 10*s.* In 1841 the wages were 10*s.* per week. In 1842 they were 10*s.*, and 9*s.* when the price of wheat was falling. In 1843 wheat was still falling, and the wages were 9*s.* In 1844 wages were 9*s.* a week, and in 1845, when the price of wheat was very low, 9*s.* per week were paid; but at Christmas, when an idea that there was no corn in the country, and that there would be a famine, induced a rise in the price of corn, the labourers were paid 10*s.* per week. This farmer was continuing to pay that price at the present moment. In Cambridgeshire and in Suffolk it was a very usual thing to pay the labourers at the rate of a peck of corn daily, and therefore the labourer could mark his wages by the sale of a peck of corn; and the same custom extended to every sack of flour, wages rising 6*d.* per week for every rise of 5*s.* a sack—the labourer's means of buying food increasing with the price of flour. He

could assure the House, that he had received his statements from men of the highest respectability. They were men who said that their neighbours acted upon the same principle. The farmers invariably found, that after a plentiful harvest, wheat sold as low as 16s. per coomb, and flour as low as 1s. per stone. He begged pardon for trespassing so long on the time of the House; but he hoped that the farmers would not again be aspersed in the way they had been.

SIR R. PEELE rose to explain: What he had said, and he thought proved, in speaking of the agricultural labourers was, that their wages in certain counties which he cited examples of, which with all the communications which had been received by the Government on the subject, he offered to place in the hands of honourable Gentlemen if they wished to be supplied—what he had said was—and he had also laid upon the Table returns for the last thirty years, and from certain agricultural counties—that, he thought, proved what he said—that the wages of the agricultural labourer did not vary in a direct ratio with the price of corn. He was speaking then of agricultural labourers only, and he thought he had proved his assertion to be founded in fact. But in speaking of the manufacturing and not of the agricultural labourer, he (Sir R. Peel) said he thought he could show that, at many times and in many cases, the wages of the manufacturing labourer had varied in an inverse ratio to the price of corn. That was the statement which he had made.

MR. HUDSON said, that after the fullest consideration, and after having listened most attentively to the arguments put forward upon that question, he felt bound to tell the House and the country that he still entertained the views he had formerly expressed, as to the impolicy of the measure then under their consideration. He agreed with the right hon. Baronet that the wages of labour did not always vary with the prices of wheat. He admitted that the price of labour, like that of every other article, was a question of competition. It was well known, that whenever we were threatened with large importations of foreign corn, capitalists became unusually cautious in affording accommodation to the public; and the consequence was that less money was spent in the payment of wages. He did not believe that the passing of the measure of the right hon. Baronet would put an end to that

evil. He felt persuaded that the effect of the measure would be rather to diminish than to increase the demand for labour. In his opinion, therefore, it was peculiarly a labourer's question; it was a question of competition with the labour of foreign countries. The right hon. Gentleman the Member for Halifax (Mr. C. Wood) had said that that had been argued as a question of rent. But he confessed that he should be ashamed to argue it as a question of rent. The great question at issue was, whether the cultivation of the land should be continued in this country, or whether we should depend on foreign supplies for our consumption. Holding, as he did, a strong opinion of the resources of the corn-producing countries of the Continent, and of their capability of growing corn at a much less expense than the cost of raising it in this country, he felt that the proposed change was one which would affect to a very considerable extent the demand for labour. If he were convinced that our agriculturists could compete on fair and equal terms with the agriculturists of foreign countries, he would not for one moment stand in the way of carrying that measure. But, as he felt assured that the tendency of the measure would be to throw large quantities of land in this country out of cultivation, he felt it his duty to offer to it his most strenuous opposition. He did not wish to show any peculiar favour to the agricultural interest; he stood there as the representative of all the interests—agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial, of this country. They had been told by the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of the Home Department, that certain noblemen felt no alarm at the passing of that measure. Now, it might be very true that noblemen like Earl Fitzwilliam and the Earl of Derby, with their 50,000*l.* a year, might very well afford to lose a portion of their incomes; but a change which might easily be borne by great landed proprietors, might seriously affect the small holders and the tenant farmers of this country. If the landlords were the only parties interested in the question, he, for one, would not stand up to advocate their views upon that occasion. It had been said that the Corn Laws had not answered the purpose for which they had been framed. Now, he conceived that they had been framed for the purpose of securing the farmers of this country against foreign competition in years of abundance and of fruitful harvests; and he certainly

could not see how they had failed in accomplishing that object. It had been alleged that considerable excitement prevailed in the country in favour of the proposed change. He would, however, venture to say that there had never been a measure of such importance submitted to Parliament which had been received so quietly by the country as the measure then under the consideration of the House. He thought that that absence of excitement was extremely creditable, as it very strikingly manifested the moderation and good sense of the people at large. He looked upon this as a great speculation. It was possible that it might answer; but all those indications which usually encouraged speculators to persevere were wanting on this occasion. Land, for some time after the war, no doubt, was much depreciated in value; but within the last ten or fifteen years, since the year 1833, agriculture had improved to a degree such as the most sanguine never could have anticipated, and was now in a most flourishing condition: how dangerous, then, how bold a step was it to take, to interfere with a state of things under which the riches and power of the country were steadily increasing, without the proof of any great public necessity! He believed that there never was a period when this country was so abundantly supplied with the necessities of life as at this very time. They had been told that there would be a paucity of cheap bread, and that it would be in fact impossible to obtain a sufficient supply. Before this Bill received the Royal Assent—if it was ever to receive that assent—he would venture to say that they would have in bond at least two millions and a half quarters of corn. The party with which he acted had been charged with delaying this measure; but he doubted if that delay had proved injurious either to the interests of the farmer or of the community. He was by no means certain that the revenue would not be benefited by the delay. Were they quite sure that they were about to let in wheat at 4s. a quarter? He thought, on the contrary, that the late fall in the market afforded an indication that before this Bill received the Royal Assent, they would receive a considerable accession, in the way of revenue, from the fall in prices. Injury might, undoubtedly, be inflicted on a few individual speculators; but it was the business of this class to take the chance of war. The measure had been called great and comprehensive; but to him

it appeared a very one-sided scheme, purely affecting the agricultural interest, without doing them a single act of justice, or relieving that interest from any of the special burdens under which it laboured. When they determined to deprive the English agriculturist of protection, they ought at least to have placed him on an equal footing with the foreigner, so as to have given him a fair chance in the competition which they were about to force upon him. It had been said, that the delay had paralysed the trade of the country. His only wonder was that the stagnation had not been greater. What must be the practical effect of a measure like this? The banker looked cautiously to his security, so that it was impossible for the farmer to obtain any advances from him; and the mortgagee became anxious as to whether the property by which his advances were secured, would be competent, under the alteration which had taken place in circumstances, to meet his demands. The right hon. Baronet had said in 1835, when 39s. was the average price of wheat, that he was not prepared to assert that it would have been cheaper under a system of free trade. He apprehended, however, that the right hon. Baronet was in error in making this assertion; for we should, no doubt, under a system of free trade, have had many additional millions of quarters of corn in the country, which must have been got rid of at some price. The quotations which he had made on a former occasion, relative to the price of wheat, had been much questioned; but since he had made that statement he had received many communications from other parties engaged in transactions connected with corn fully corroborating it, and expressing their surprise that the House of Commons was not better informed on the question they were legislating upon, as the question of price was a most important element in the consideration of the subject. He had received a letter from a practical man, long resident in the East Riding of Yorkshire, one of the most fruitful districts in existence, with whom he was entirely unacquainted, and who had communicated with him solely in consequence of seeing the report of his speech in the papers. His correspondent stated that the average price of wheat was, at Burlington, 38s. 10d., barley, 21s. 8d., oats, 18s. 5d.; so far from any sign of famine manifesting itself. He also stated that, with a continuance of the present fine weather, instead of having a

famine in May, they would require another market to get rid of their produce. This was the letter of a man who had been for forty years largely engaged in the corn trade; and what he had foretold had actually taken place. Surprise was expressed when statements were made that foreign wheat had been purchased at 25s. per quarter; but there were persons at Hull and Newcastle who had purchased it at 18s. per quarter. It was said that farmers were quite willing to take farms at as high a rent as last year. Now if this were the case since the present measure was proposed, it must have altogether arisen from the confidence which the tenant-farmers reposed in the landowners. The farmers knew that if Sir R. Peel's measure passed, and that the price of their produce was ruinously reduced, the landlords of England would not hesitate to make a corresponding abatement in the rent. But he doubted this indifference on the part of the farmers to the measures of the Cabinet. He had let some farms himself since the free importation of corn was proposed to Parliament, and he must say that the farmers expressed very great hostility indeed—some of them were even thinking about selling off their stock, and embarking in some other business; but he felt it only right to tell these farmers, that in case Sir R. Peel's measure passed, and that it was attended by the disastrous results which he anticipated, that he would make a corresponding reduction in his rents. [Mr. ROBEUCK: That must be generally done.] He did not think it quite fair that he should be interrupted, although, indeed, he could hardly wonder at the interruption on the present occasion, considering the quarter whence it proceeded. The hon. Member for Bath did not hesitate to interrupt any man; but he could assure him that no interruption from him would in the least put him out of his course, or hinder him from expressing his views to the House. If the measure should be passed, some relief ought to be given to the landed interest commensurate with the loss it would sustain, and the taxes it had to endure. He must say, that he did not think it fair that the fundholders should remain untaxed, whilst the landholders of 300*l.* a year were paying 75*l.* in the shape of highway rates, poor rates, and county rates. He would not attempt to lay down any plan—that would be presumptuous in him—but he sincerely hoped that full compensation would be made to the landed

interest. If the measure should pass, and be attended with the results which they believed it would, they would have the satisfaction of reflecting that they were no parties to it—that they were not the speculators—that they were not provisional committee-men—that they had raised their voice against it, believing it would prove injurious to all, but especially to the humbler classes of their fellow-countrymen, who were least able to endure the ruinous competition it would induce. If, on the contrary, it succeeded—if their fears were happily disappointed, and the hopes of its projectors realized, none would rejoice more sincerely than that party to which he had the honour to belong—that party which, believing it would prove injurious, had felt it to be their duty to give it all the opposition in their power.

The MARQUESS OF WORCESTER said: I assure the House I would not have intruded myself on its notice, if my constituents, who belong to the manufacturing as well as to the agricultural classes, did not express an earnest and almost unanimous desire that the measure should not pass. I have in my pocket, at this moment, a letter from a respectable person, which is a slight proof that what some of my hon. Friends had long since stated, that distress in Ireland was exaggerated, and for which they were so much blamed, is not only probable, but strictly true. The letter I allude to is dated the 1st of May, from Bristol, and it sets forth that a vessel bearing sixty tons of potatoes had arrived there from Baltimore, and that another vessel was daily expected. This letter likewise states that a vessel containing sixty tons of potatoes, was about leaving Kinsale for the same port, in a week after date. Now, Sir, if this statement be true, and if the distress in Ireland really exists, I really think it is the duty of the Government to take measures to prevent this exportation. It seems rather strango to be complaining of famine in a country whence food is daily exported. I am opposed to this measure, not only because I think it is bad in itself, but because I am of opinion that the farmers who have been suffering from the late Tariff are altogether unable to bear this additional infliction. If the Government will not only glut our home market with foreign cattle and foreign sheep, but deluge it with foreign corn, the English farmers will have no resource whatever left. [The noble Marquess read a return of the quan-

titles of cattle weekly sent to the English market from Holland, Germany, and Prussia.] But, Sir, I can hardly wonder at the measures of the Government, seeing that it is their design to make this a manufacturing country solely. The right hon. Baronet, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, avowed his opinion, that this country is no longer to be considered as an agricultural country. [Sir JAMES GRAHAM: What I said was, that this country is not to be considered exclusively agricultural.] Well, Sir, I must say, that I do not recollect that word "exclusively." I thought, Sir, the right hon. Baronet's words were "agricultural country," and not an "exclusively agricultural country." I must say again, that I so understood the right hon. Baronet, and that he is so reported. I think that both the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government and the Secretary of State for the Home Department are doing their best to prevent this country being an agricultural country any longer. I think the sentiments of both right hon. Baronets do not differ much from those expressed by the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden) who says, that the towns ought to rule the country. The sentiments may be expressed in different language, but both amount to this—that this country ought to be converted into one vast receptacle of manufacturers. The right hon. Baronet made another observation—namely, that the consumers, not the producers, were the people to be considered. For my part, Sir, I humbly think both classes should find equal favour in the eyes of the Legislature. It seems to me, that there is nobody the right hon. Baronet is so anxious to protect as the foreigners, for he will have their produce poured into our markets, irrespective of the loss which our farmers must incur by being subject to a greater cost of production. I think the right hon. Baronet will find, that if he carries out his principle—but he is not very fond of carrying out principles—he will find, that the manufacturers will be as much opposed to its full development as the agriculturists now are; and that they will mourn the day when they first lent their assent to these schemes. I have heard it said, that the farmers are indifferent to the progress of this measure. I have received a letter from one of my constituents, a most respectable and intelligent farmer; and in answer to a query as to what the opinion of the farmers is, he says—

"If those who believe the farmers are for free trade or indifferent to it, were at Cirencester market last week, they would be speedily undeceived, for they would have heard many farmers cursing the Minister for his measures and for his double dealing."

I must say, that I have heard precisely the same feeling expressed by the farmers myself in ten or fourteen different market places. I believe other hon. Gentlemen near me heard the same language expressed. Some hon. Members, who sit behind the Treasury bench admit that they regard this as a very hard and injurious measure, but still that they have so much confidence in the right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) that they will support it. Well, Sir, I cannot understand this reasoning. I prefer looking to the measures, and considering their tendency, irrespective of those who bring them forward. It appears to me, to use a familiar illustration, that the First Lord of the Treasury resembles a jockey who was put up to ride a great race, but who pulls up his horse in the midst of it. The right hon. Baronet was put up to ride the race of protection; but, Sir, he has pulled up his steed, and not merely allowed his opponent to triumph, but has actually ridden the race of free trade himself. Whether he will be victorious or not is another matter.

Mr. M. GORE wished to make a few remarks before this matter was finally settled by the House. He must first be allowed to say, that in some of the observations which had fallen from hon. Gentlemen who took a different view from that which he entertained, he fully concurred. He concurred with them in holding that no party had any right to complain that this matter had been so fully and maturely debated; and from the discussion which had taken place, one good effect had, he thought, arisen, that, whatever might be the opinions of individual Members as to the merits of the Bill, it proved to the country that those who moved in the higher circles did possess that candour and that superiority of intellect which under all circumstances, and at all times, he trusted they would maintain. The discreet and temperate way in which hon. Gentlemen had advocated the cause they had embraced, merited every commendation. He differed from many hon. Gentlemen who had spoken as to the apprehensions they entertained of the effect of this measure on the interests of agriculture. He should first allude to some remarks which had been made by

a tenant farmer who had gone to Russia a very great protectionist, and labouring under the impression that Russia and Prussia possessed an unlimited supply of corn. But after he had acquired experience, he became satisfied that the people possessed neither knowledge nor means to enable them so to conduct their agricultural operations as to inflict injury, by their competition, on the British farmer. That gentleman stated a variety of circumstances in corroboration of his opinion. Agricultural operations he described as being in a very primitive state, and the agricultural implements in use were of a very rude structure.

"The consequence is," he observes, "that the lands, for want of strength to till them, look poverty-stricken and neglected, and must, under any circumstances, require an immense outlay of capital to improve them, independently of the energy and skill required to overcome the difficulties as regards the shortness of the season during which anything connected with the improvement of the soil can be carried on. The earth is closed against all cultivation for seven months of continued and severe winter. One month of the year may be divided into spring and autumn, and four months into extreme heat of summer."

As to the chance of extensive pastures being taken into cultivation, he stated that they were so exposed to snow storms that the greatest possible obstacles existed to the successful adoption of such a course. He says—

"It may be thought that these pastures may be cultivated in case of a market for corn in England. But this cannot take place, since they are subject to violent snow storms, which drive everything before them. Such is the power of these hurricanes of wind and snow, that cattle, when these are approaching, if not prevented by the herdsmen, take fright and run into ravines, where they are smothered. Besides, these lands are subject to the visitation of locusts; and the effects of severe drought in the summer, increased by the continuous wet to which they are subject in the winter."

He mentioned various other details, and stated, that in some parts of Prussia the wages of agricultural labourers were greater than those of the same class in England. Those were the remarks of a tenant farmer who went abroad with very different opinions, and who altered his views in consequence of what came under his own personal observation. As to America, he (Mr. M. Gore) was also of opinion that the production of grain there had been greatly overrated, and that there was no reason to anticipate any influx for many years, such as would prove prejudicial to the agricultural interest of this country. As to grain in

America, it appeared from official returns in 1840, ascertained by the persons appointed to take the sixth census, that the total produce of the Union was—

			Bushels.
Wheat	...	...	84,832,272
Barley	...	...	4,101,501
Oats	...	...	123,071,341
Rye	...	...	18,045,567
Buckwheat	...	...	7,201,743
Indian corn	...	...	377,531,875
Total	...	...	615,515,302

He had received a communication from a gentleman in the City on the same point; it was as follows:—

"In reply to your inquiry, the exportation of flour from New Orleans is about 400,000 barrels in good years, and 200,000 barrels in ordinary years. No wheat is exported from the United States worth mention. The total average exportation per annum does not amount to 45,000 quarters for the last thirteen years, 1831 to 1843, both inclusive, and this is principally sent to Canada, and is a trade likely to increase in that quarter; but experience has proved that flour is the form in which the cereal product of America must be conveyed to Europe. The average exportation of flour for thirteen years does not quite reach 1,000,000 of barrels annually from all the States of the American Union collectively; it is 907,771 barrels exactly (1831 to 1843 inclusively). Of this quantity 225,000 barrels went on the average annually to Great Britain; 175,000 to British America, Canada, and Newfoundland; 135,000 to the British West Indies; 80,000 to Cuba; 170,000 to Brazil; being 785,000 barrels; and 215,000 barrels went to other places on the American continent. But it is quite apparent that the average exportation from America into Europe does not exceed 400,000 barrels annually; each barrel contains 106 lbs. net weight of flour. For six consecutive years the export of flour from the United States to Great Britain did not amount altogether to 55,000 barrels, or an average of 9,000 barrels per annum, and they were the years 1833 to 1838 inclusive. In the year 1843 there were only 14,000 barrels shipped from the United States to Great Britain. Nothing is more difficult to answer with satisfaction than the American part of the corn question; but my impression is, that experience being better than prophecy, we may take the export of the past as a guide for the future, and say that America may furnish to Europe about 500,000 barrels of flour from the United States, and the same quantity from Canada to Europe. All the rest is absorbed by American wants, the West Indies, Newfoundland, the Brazils, Cuba, St. Domingo, and all the hot countries where wheat will not grow; and also to supply her mercantile marine all over the world. The price at which flour could be furnished I cannot possibly say, but it has hitherto cost over 30s. per barrel in Europe. When the price is under this rate we find supplies fall off."

He (Mr. M. Gore) might be permitted to say for his own part, with the view he took of the question, that if he thought any very great inconvenience was likely to re-

sult from the importation of corn either from America, or from the continent of Europe, he should hesitate very much before he gave his consent to the Bill. He should next lay before the House a statement in reference to the continental markets. It varied in some respects from that of Mr. Macculloch, who stated the average prices of wheat in Dantzic, for eleven years, ending with 1841, at 37s. 11d. a quarter, which, adding 10d. for shipping charges, made the average price, free on board, 38s. 9d. a quarter, and adding 12s. or 13s. for importation and delivery to millers in London, the average cost of Dantzic wheat in England, free of duty, was from 51s. to 52s. a quarter. Such was Mr. Macculloch's statement. He held in his hand various tables which had been furnished to him by Mr. Body. They gave a statement of the wheat and flour shipped from Dantzic to this country for the twelve years ending 1843; also the prices and the freights for a number of years. In some years the prices certainly appeared low—sometimes not 33s. or 34s.—but then the shipments had fallen off exactly in proportion. It appeared that as prices had fallen, shipments had also fallen off, except in 1836—in explanation of which Mr. Body says—

"The exportation from Dantzic in 1836 was almost entirely speculative, and consisted of parcels which had been purchased in Dantzic in the two or three years previous, but not shipped. The quantity is not large, compared with the latter years of largo export. The wheat was brought here on speculation, and a very large quantity of it was shipped to America in the years 1837 and 1838. I sent over a large quantity myself. We were tired of letting the wheat lie at Dantzic, and so we brought it over here, and after keeping it here twelve months we shipped a great part of it to America, (the whole proceeding was an episode,) and much money was lost by it. The quantity stated in our Dantzic corn return of exports is in lots, each last containing ten quarters. I beg respectfully to call your attention to this; we consider 90,000 quarters the quantity sent from Dantzic in 1836 to England, in any year, and under the most unfavourable circumstances, to be a very small speculation indeed. The authority for the prices paid at Dantzic is the highly respectable firm of Theodore Behrend and Co., of Dantzic; and we can confirm the same from our actual experience. The same house furnished the quotations of the course of exchange; and the same house procured from Mr. Retz, the sworn broker and official officer of exports, (*schiffs abrechner*, as he is called,) the quantities exported and the rates of freight. All these documents passed through the hands of Behrend, and there can be no doubt of their authenticity. But the same parties who were so willing to give information when it was considered to be a piece of statistical news only, are now

very averse to give further information, because they, in Dantzic, look upon the change in the Corn Laws with great aversion. If you ask at Dantzic what they prefer, they will all say, 'the old sliding scale.' If you ask at Warsaw, they will say, 'free trade.'"

The prices of grain from Odessa were stated in the circular of a house in Leghorn at 33s. to 35s. But the quality was very inferior. It might be said that, though the introduction of such grain would not affect the interests of those who grew good corn, it would affect the interests of those who grew inferior grain. He had seen specimens of the foreign grain of which such apprehensions were entertained, and, really, it was such miserable stuff that he did not believe they would get people to consume it in this country. At the same time, he was ready to allow that this great measure, like other great changes, would probably be attended with considerable inconvenience to various parties whose interests were concerned. He had made inquiries as to the feelings with which the measure was regarded by such parties, and he admitted at once that the opinions he had received were very various. A very considerable proportion took the same view with himself, that there was no ground for apprehending a large importation of foreign grain. Others took a different view; and he might be permitted to refer to the opinion of a gentleman whose authority was of great weight—Mr. Wiggins. That gentleman thought that the change would have some prejudicial influence, which, however, would be but temporary. Speaking generally, the result of the inquiries he (Mr. M. Gore) had instituted was, that the agriculturists were excited far beyond what circumstances at all justified as to the consequences of this measure. The farmers were a great support and an ornament to the country; and he was sure there was no Gentleman on either side of the House who would not sympathize with them, and endeavour to do everything to prevent their interests from sustaining injury. While he did think that this measure would exercise but an inconsiderable influence upon those interests, he trusted that the good feeling of the English landlords would lead them to keep in view the position in which their tenantry were placed; and, what was of the greatest importance, give them good advice as to the cultivation of their land; so that landlord and tenant might stand on a better footing than for some time past. If the small farmers were

removed and capitalists substituted, cultivation might be carried on possibly to greater advantage; but though he trusted that the result of the proposed change would be the introduction of a better system of farming, he hoped that everything would be done in a kindly spirit towards those who were engaged in the cultivation of the soil, and that no course would be pursued which did not conduce to the comfort and happiness of those invaluable classes. The effect of the measure on the condition of the labouring classes was an important point for the consideration of the House. There was a great rise of prices between 1792 and 1801. Mr. Tooke says—

“Arthur Young, in his *Annals of Agriculture*, observes, that a person is now living in the vicinity of Bury who, when in 1792 he laboured for 5s. a week, could purchase with that 5s. a bushel of wheat, ditto of malt, a pound of butter, a pound of cheese, and a pennyworth of tobacco; in 1801 the same articles cost—

Bushel of wheat	£0 16 0
Ditto of malt	0 0 0
1 lb. of butter	0 1 0
1 lb. of cheese	0 0 4
Pennyworth of tobacco	0 0 1

£1 6 5

Suppose in 1801 his wages were..... 9s. 0d.

Suppose as a pauper, from rates..... 6 0

Total..... 15 0

So that to enable him to purchase the same quantities he procured when his week's wages were 5s., it would now require 11s. 5d. more than his wages and the parish allowance altogether. The comparison is,” says Mr. Young, “fair as far as it goes, because the extreme in both cases, the very lowest in the first, and the very highest in the last.”

There was a rise in artisan and manufacturing labour between 1792 and 1801, but in a small proportion only to the rise in the prices of necessaries. Various statements were put forth by different classes of artisans at that time, setting forth the inadequateness of the rise of wages, including the most recent advance in 1801. Among other statements, was one from the journeymen tailors, by which it appeared that their wages from 1777 to 1795 had been 11. 2s. 9d. per week, which, at the price of 9½d. for the quartern loaf, would purchase 36 loaves; while the utmost advance of wages, which, in 1795, was to 25s., and in 1801 to 27s. per week, would purchase only 18 loaves and a-half in the latter year. A statement from printers' compositors, whose weekly wages were advanced from 24s. to 29s. in 1795, and to 30s. in 1801, gives a similar result in the disproportion of the advance of wages to the rise of ne-

cessaries. By the Greenwich Hospital table, the wages of carpenters, bricklayers, masons, and plumbers, appeared to have experienced very little advance, according to the quotations of 1800, as compared with the 20 years preceding, viz.:—carpenters from 2s. 6d. to 3s. 2d. per day; bricklayers from 2s. 4d. to 3s. per day; masons from 2s. 8d. to 2s. 10d. per day; plumbers from 3s. to 3s. 3d. per day. He believed that the present measure, like many other measures that had been brought forward, was overrated on both sides as respected its consequences. He, for one, did not believe that it was to make bread wonderfully cheap, or that it would materially depress domestic agriculture. As in the case of all great changes, some inconveniences must probably at first result; but he conceived that the measure would ultimately tend to increase the comfort, promote the happiness, and advance the prosperity of the great mass of the inhabitants of this mighty kingdom, and that it would contribute very much, coupled with the resources of modern science, to stimulate and foster agriculture. He believed that there existed in this country a spirit, energy, and activity, that would in future make it as superior to the rest of the world in agriculture and manufactures as it hitherto had been; and that the native zeal and enterprise of Englishmen would advance the science of agriculture to greater perfection than ever. But while he supported this measure, and intended to record his vote in favour of the third reading, he might be allowed to express a hope that those other measures which were alluded to at the commencement of the Session, and which were, he would not say to compensate, but to be of great utility to the agricultural interest, would be brought forward at as early a period as possible. Though he did not think that the agricultural interest required protection, yet he felt that it was their bounden duty to look at it with a kindly feeling, and to extend towards it every aid and assistance in their power. There was one circumstance worthy of attention with respect to the sale and transfer of property. That champion of protection, Mr. Alison, in his work on Population, pointed out the difficulty in the sale of estates, and the transfer of property, and the great advantage which would result if measures were taken to remove this inconvenience. As regards Ireland, there would be few circumstances more advantageous than the

removal of such inconvenience, coupled with the extension of the tenant right, due regard being paid to the rights of property, which ought always to be held sacred. He would not now enter into further details on the subject; but he would add he should grieve, as much as the bitterest opponents of this measure, at its passing, if he thought that it could, in the remotest degree, tend to injure the agricultural interest, or the aristocracy, whose prosperity was identified with that of the nation at large. The aristocracy were eminent for the zeal they had displayed in behalf of the liberties of the country; and who could fail to respect and reverence their manly sentiment, their heroic spirit, and their sensibility of principle, in which, as Mr. Burke justly observed, consisted the cheap defence of nations? He should then much grieve if his vote to-night should shake the stability of this aristocracy, whose fate he believed to be inseparably connected with that of the country, which was deeply rooted in the affections of the people, and embodied in the institutions of the country. He thought the manner in which the present discussion had been conducted reflected the highest credit on the Legislature of this country, however great the difference of opinion respecting its policy might be. He was not unaware that great constitutional questions sprang out of it. The evil arising from the breaking up of a great party had been touched on; and though he might hold that that was but a temporary disruption, he would yet allow that in this country it was a great evil. In a constitutional point of view he would rather that this measure had been brought forward by the noble Lord the Member for London; and he, for his part, would then have supported it as warmly as he now did when brought forward by the right hon. Baronet. He supported it not merely from a feeling of confidence in this or that Minister; but reflection on the nature of the question had induced him to come to the conclusion at which he had arrived. And with respect to the future state of parties in this country, he trusted that with most of those who valued the real interests of the country, it was immaterial what party ruled the State. It was, as Mr. Pitt truly said, in one of his earliest and best speeches, of very little consequence who were "out," or who were "in;" but it was of great consequence that the affairs of this country should be conducted with wisdom, prudence, and firmness. He, therefore, trusted that what-

ever might be the fate of this measure, there still might be found a Government powerful and strong; able to uphold the interests of the country at home, to enforce them abroad, and determined, amid whatever storms and tempests might rage, to maintain the majesty, the dignity, and the greatness of England.

Mr. LAWSON said, that he knew that in the agricultural district with which he was connected, whenever corn was not prosperous, then the districts invariably suffered and declined, both as regarded the manufacturers and agriculturists. In his part of the country there was the greatest fear and apprehension, and in fact a great panic existing, as to the present measures of the Government; and on no occasion before had he ever found such unanimity of sentiment amongst all classes, and of different politics, in thinking that that principle of protection to native industry ought to be upheld. He had had the honour of presenting petitions from fifty to sixty townships in his own neighbourhood, and from the borough which he represented, signed by persons of all classes, praying the House not to pass these measures, and he now rose for the purpose of vindicating the opinions therein expressed. Whatever alteration had taken place in the sentiments and opinions of those holding high offices in the Government of this country, it did not follow that even so humble an individual as himself should also consent to change his opinions upon this question, as they had changed, with a view of following in their train. He could not consent to alter those sentiments and opinions which he had entertained up to this period of his life at the beek of any individual. He wished to know what would be the price of corn if the Bill before the House passed into law? On that point the Minister had given them no information? He objected to the Bill because it would increase the dependence of this country upon foreign nations. He objected to it also because it had been introduced by the men now in office. If he had any predilection in its favour even, he would not give it his support, because he was of opinion that it should not be brought forward in a Parliament which had been elected upon an entirely hostile principle. He, for one, did not admit that it was a measure which would produce good fruit. Fruit it might produce, no doubt—apparently good at the outset; but the House might depend upon it that the prices would soon rise to the

famine figure. And if there was good in it, there would be no hope of its extinction until all the small farmers of England would have been ruined. Corn would get into the hands of the factors, who would accumulate it for the purpose of obtaining the highest possible price; and thus the public would not be benefited in the slightest degree, while the agriculturists would be destroyed. With respect to the price of potatoes, on which so much had been said, as far as his knowledge went, the alarm that existed on that head was entirely groundless. In Yorkshire, he had never paid more than 2s. the bushel for them, whereas, in London, he was now charged 15s. per sack. And when potatoes were sent upon speculation from Yorkshire to London, no one could be found to purchase them, because of the monopoly which existed among the large salesmen. He was not prepared, therefore, to support Her Majesty's Ministers on this occasion. He had no confidence in them. He had no faith in the stability either of their opinions or their policy; and he candidly stated that, if agitation were suffered to continue at the rate it had been in Ireland, he should not be surprised to find the right hon. Baronet come down one day to that House and propose a repeal of the legislative Union.

Mr. VERNON SMITH said, he should not detain them long. He was fully aware that hon. Members felt a satiety, if not sickness, at the prolongation of this discussion. Only one valuable result had ensued from this discussion, that whereas on former occasions the two great interests of agriculture and manufactures had been arrayed against each other—the agriculturists reproaching the manufacturers as having for their only object to depress wages and raise their own profits, the manufacturers upbraiding the agriculturists with a wish to keep up prices and raise rents—now, on the contrary, whatever acrimony might have been exhibited in the course of the discussion, had been diverted into the more legitimate, and he might say constitutional, channel of abusing Gentlemen in office. The absence of those divisions on the present occasion he was inclined to attribute to the course pursued by the hon. Members favourable to a repeal of the Corn Laws, who had abstained from addressing the House, and from delivering those attacks they had formerly directed against the agricultural interest. He was far from regarding this measure,

with the hon. Member for Sunderland, as the wildest and maddest of all conceivable speculations; but it was impossible not to see that in any measure like this, there must be some speculation and some inconvenience. Although it seemed now to be the prevalent doctrine on that (the Opposition) side of the House, that the most manly course to be adopted was to change one's opinion, and defend the change, he could say that his own opinion had always been in favour of a change in the Corn Laws. He should not, on this occasion, enter into any statistical details; he should support his vote on those general reasons on which, after all, a measure of this kind must be rested. He did not believe that any country in the world would be found capable of supplying this nation with its chief article of food; all the elements that produced a rise in prices would combine to raise the price of foreign corn to us, and therefore to save the agricultural interest from injury. As little could he think that a country like ours would not be able to improve its agriculture—an art yet in its infancy. In that art practice had hitherto preceded science; but science was now about to take the lead of practice, and point out the methods which the husbandman should follow. His only reason for addressing the House on the present occasion was, that he wished to point out one or two features of the measure which he considered objectionable, and would prefer to see changed. He regarded the position of the hon. Member for Newcastle under Lyne as a very good one—that they should look on the one hand to the arguments by which this measure was supported, and on the other hand to the political evils by which it might be attended. If any speculation or hazard attached to this measure, the hazard would fall on those persons who were now in the occupation of the poorest possible land, subject to the highest possible rent; land which, he contended, ought never to have been cultivated, and which never would have been cultivated but for the protection which our laws had for years afforded it. There were other persons who might say, "You have always told us that we had nothing to fear from competition, and therefore that we might be as lazy and unskillful as we pleased;" and they might reproach the Legislature with having cut off their security. He was of opinion that this difficulty might have been met by an arrangement of the laws affecting the agriculturists, had such been under-

taken by Her Majesty's Ministers. Besides the Corn Laws, there was another set of Acts which had been brought by the negligence of the Legislature into such a state as pressed most unfairly on the agricultural interest—he meant the Acts which referred to local rating. He thought that, simultaneously with the repeal of the Corn Laws, Ministers might have introduced some measure which would relieve the agricultural interest from a considerable portion of the local taxation. They had introduced a measure which they said was not intended as a compensation for the repeal of the Corn Laws; but if it were not so intended, it was rather strange that it should have been introduced at the same moment. This he considered quite incompetent for what, but for the denial, he must have supposed to be the purpose of Her Majesty's Ministers; and he should still urge on Ministers to consider the question of compensation, and to embrace the whole question of rating in their view, in order to see where the agricultural interest were most heavily pressed; for that they were pressed to a certain extent, he thought could not be denied. Every year there was an Act passed to relieve stock in trade from being rated to those purposes for which land was rated. Why was this done? Not, it was said, because stock in trade was an improper subject of rating in itself; but on account of the extremely embarrassing nature of the attempt, and the difficulties which attended the levy. Now, if they did not think it expedient to levy a rate on stock in trade, it was surely unfair to the agriculturists to increase in the same proportion the amount levied from them, and subject them to an additional burden. That Act was first passed when a judgment was given in favour of rating stock in trade; and he thought, therefore, the agricultural interest had so far just ground to complain of the way in which they were treated. Whether this were or were not a sufficient argument to induce Ministers to undertake this subject, he thought it a question still worthy of their consideration, and one so coupled with the present state of the agricultural interest, that there could be no more fitting opportunity than the present for bringing it forward. Another point to which he wished to advert, though it was rather unfashionable in the House, was the question of a low duty on corn. In throwing aside that question entirely, the right hon. Baronet had surprised him more than by any other course he could have pursued,

because if there were any basis on which the right hon. Baronet's fame rested, it was his financial skill. He thought it strange, therefore, that the right hon. Baronet should have been content to surrender the revenue he might have derived from that plan. He felt himself obliged to conclude, in spite of all that could be said by hon. Gentlemen around him, that if Government had thought fit to ask, in the first instance, a low fixed duty, they would have been able to carry that measure, and to raise a revenue on as favourable terms as it could be raised in this country. He could not but believe that a low fixed duty would have been paid entirely by the foreigner, and not by the consumer; and if so, no Ministers had made a greater sacrifice than the present in refusing to avail themselves of this source of revenue. The course taken in 1842 was to alter the sliding scale; and that being so, he considered the only alternative offered to him was between a sliding scale and entire abolition. He had, therefore, voted for the Motion of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton; but at the same time he thought, and he should not hesitate to maintain, that the right hon. Baronet had abandoned a considerable amount of revenue, in throwing aside altogether the question of a low fixed duty. He most sincerely hoped that the measure might attain complete success; but he must say that the right hon. Gentleman himself had brought it into a position of great difficulty, by alleging in its behalf pretences which he could not think well founded. Of all times and periods in the recent history of our affairs, the right hon. Gentleman ought to have chosen for proposing his measure one of the utmost prosperity. He must contend, having always been an advocate for repeal, that that time had arrived in the summer of 1845. Never, in his opinion, had there been a season of so great prosperity, both for trade, agriculture, and manufactures, as was then exhibited in this country. But the right hon. Baronet chose instead the autumn, and accompanied his proposal with a very different statement from that by which it ought to have been prefaced. The right hon. Baronet placed his measure on the ground of foreseeing a famine, when he ought rather to have brought it forward in a season of abundance and prosperity, thus taking a course in the highest degree dangerous to the future authority of their legislation; because, in avowing himself to be driven and hurried into it to escape

from an emergency, the right hon. Baronet had not shown it to be the result of reason, but had held it up to the country as the result of risk, peril, and danger. And now he was afraid that if the right hon. Baronet succeeded, the success would appear to be owing to those incentives of which he ought never to have availed himself; and that if failure should ensue, as he trusted it would not, it would appear to be owing to the legitimate exercise of the constitutional privileges of a branch of the Legislature which he, for one, would be sorry to see exerted.

MR. DISRAELI: Sir, the Secretary of State, in the speech he made on the first night of this discussion, reminded Gentlemen sitting on these benches, and professing opinions favourable to the protection of the industry of their country, that in the various and prolonged discussions which, during late years, have occurred with regard to great commercial changes, they have nevertheless found it necessary to abandon many of the opinions they professed, and to give up many of those dogmas which they previously upheld. Sir, I acknowledge the fact. I believe that to be the necessary result of all discussion; nor can I understand the use of public discussion at all, if it be not to correct erroneous impressions; or if at the conclusion both parties are to take refuge in the cry, that they have not changed a single opinion which they held before the question came under debate. Sir, I do not claim for myself—and I think I may venture to say none of my friends around me claim—an infallibility in argument. We listen with attention and respect to every argument brought against the opinions which we advocate; and if we find that any argument thus advanced cannot be satisfactorily answered, we feel the necessity of no longer maintaining an opposite and untenable conclusion. But if this rule applies to our party, I think I could without difficulty show to the Secretary of State that it is a quality not peculiar to us. I rather imagine that some opinions loudly advocated and long ably maintained by hon. Gentlemen opposite—I still address myself to hon. Gentlemen opposite, for, though this discussion was commenced by Her Majesty's Government, I always remember who were really the originators of the ideas—I say I think that some of the opinions formerly advocated by hon. Gentlemen opposite are now no longer upheld, and are therefore to be placed in that category of abandonment

to which the Secretary of State referred. I might begin with cheap bread. We heard a Minister of the Crown, a Member of the Cabinet, even in this year, in this important Session, when all the opinions of Her Majesty's Government must doubtless be so well matured and so well considered, with all the advantage of four Cabinet meetings in a week—we heard a Member of Her Majesty's Government announce that the clap-trap cry of cheap bread was given up by all parties. The right hon. Gentleman seemed to hold it, as his noble Colleague the Secretary for Ireland did a few years back, as the "fugitive cry of a dying faction." Even the hon. Member for Stockport, the highest authority on this point, announced that the cry of cheap bread had never been his. Well, then, that is one great opinion abandoned. We shall presently find that there are others in the same predicament. I believe it is no longer maintained that our Corn Laws are productive of extraordinary fluctuations in the price of corn. And yet that was an opinion which was once very industriously disseminated in the country: one perpetually introduced into the discussions of this House; and which has unquestionably influenced the existing public opinion on the main question. Yet I believe it is now admitted that the tendency neither of the present, nor even of the late Corn Laws, has been to produce extraordinary fluctuations in price. Well, that is another great opinion that has been abandoned. Then we were told that these same Corn Laws were the bane of agriculture. That opinion is certainly given up. We have shown you—and you have admitted the facts—from the evidence of the best authorities, the most intelligent valuers under the Tithe Commutation Act, and the most skilful land agents in the country—we have shown you that in England the average produce of an acre is twenty-eight bushels of wheat. We know by a report prepared by a public commissioner, that the average produce per acre in Russia is sixteen bushels; while we have evidence that the average amount in France is fifteen bushels. But I have got a document here which is very much at the service of hon. Members opposite. It is the Report in 1845 of the Agricultural Society of New York, giving the average produce of sixty-nine counties in that State, and it appears from this report that the average produce of wheat per acre in the United States is fourteen bushels. Does it then appear

from these figures that protection is indeed the bane of agriculture? These statements show that England produces more corn per acre in a great degree than any other country. This, then, is a third opinion that has been abandoned. Again, there is another opinion which has been put forward with much pertinacity. It has been long loudly and diligently asserted that the population in this country increases in a greater ratio than its production. That opinion has been given up. You came down to the House and told us always that the population was increasing a thousand a day, or 365,000 a year, and after your fashion you assumed the country could not feed the people. We have shown you, or rather you have shown us, for it has been one of the circumstances adduced by the Minister in favour of his measure, that the price of wheat for years has regularly declined. If we divide the current century into three equal portions of fifteen years each, you will find the price of wheat lowest in the last division, so that while the population has been increasing in the ratio you allege, the means of production have been increasing in a still greater ratio; the population has been increasing in this degree, and at the same time the price of the necessaries of life has been decreasing. There is another dogma which has also much influenced public opinion; and that is, that our Corn Laws have produced hostile tariffs. This opinion also is, I believe, now abandoned: every day's experience assures us, whatever may be the policy of the Government of this country, that continental nations and manufacturing countries are not to be influenced by it. But, according to the new school of philosophy, we need not dwell on this; it does not signify whether other nations are influenced by our liberal policy or not; we are quite independent of all such considerations. There is yet another opinion which I have observed frequently advanced in speeches out of this House; and speeches out of this House, be it remembered, have had much influence on conduct within it. It has been often urged at public meetings by the hon. Member for Stockport, whose speeches I always read with attention, that the amount of freight alone would be a sufficient protection to land. The hon. Member has been in the habit of assuring his audience that the average rate of freight was 10s. 6d. per quarter of corn, and that to this extent a protection was afforded to agriculture. I believe hon. Gentlemen have even made

the same declaration in this House; and I believe had it been made in this House a year ago, we should all of us have believed it. Now, I doubt whether there is any freight that amounts to 10s. 6d. I doubt whether at present we pay 10s. 6d. per quarter even from Odessa. But generally speaking it is now universally admitted, that freight is no protection at all, for it is just as expensive to transport a quarter of corn from one English port to another, as to bring it from any of the contiguous foreign ports from which your chief supply is anticipated. I will say one word on a topic which I have already touched upon lightly, because I heard a cheer from an hon. Member opposite when I mentioned that the tendency of the present Corn Laws was not to produce great fluctuations in price. I do not mention these topics merely in retort to the Secretary of State, but because I think it not an inconvenient mode to clear the course of all collateral topics before I address myself to the main question. We maintain, then, with regard to the present and even the late Corn Laws, that they have not produced extraordinary fluctuation in price; on the contrary, we maintain that the fluctuation of price in England has been less than in any other country in the world. I will establish this fact on data that are incontrovertible. Understand I lay this down as a fact, that every country, rich or poor, in Europe or America, has in respect of the important necessary of life, grain, been subject to much greater fluctuation in price than England. Mr. Secretary Gladstone recently moved for an important return—a return which I observe is never alluded to by hon. Gentlemen opposite. It is a return, from 1834 to 1840 inclusive, of the highest and lowest weekly prices of wheat per imperial quarter in most of the principal capitals of the United States. Now, I take one of these capitals, Philadelphia, because the peculiar circumstances of that capital tell the least for my argument. Philadelphia is the capital of one of the wealthiest and most populous States of the American Union; and it has this peculiarity—that it is a State that does not commonly produce sufficient corn for the supply of its inhabitants. It should be observed that little or no corn or flour was imported from America into England during the first five years of this period, and that the importation in 1839 and 1840 tended to raise the low prices of those years, and so to diminish the extreme

limits of their fluctuation. Philadelphia, too, is a great mart of commerce, communicating freely with every region of the world, and its corn trade is free, being subject only to a moderate fixed duty; a moderate fixed duty of 8s. 8d. per quarter. Now, Sir, what are the facts? It appears by this return of Mr. Secretary Gladstone, that the average annual difference between the highest and lowest prices of wheat in Philadelphia is 47 per cent., while during the corresponding period in England it was only 33 per cent.; and while the extreme difference between the highest and lowest prices of wheat in this septennial period was 270 per cent. in Philadelphia, it was only 227 in England. And yet no septennial period could have been chosen which would have exhibited, under the operation of the Corn Laws, such extensive fluctuation of prices. It may be objected to this return that it only gives the extreme weekly prices of wheat, and it may be possible that local and peculiar causes may have had an effect on those prices. Well, then, here is a return of the average annual prices of wheat in Philadelphia from 1830 to 1838 inclusive; and I find the difference between the highest and lowest price of wheat at Philadelphia to be 121 per cent., while the corresponding difference during the same period in England is only 69 per cent. The returns from every considerable port and corn market in Europe have been analysed, and the result I find to be of exactly the same character. But it will be urged that the prices of corn abroad are disturbed by the action of our Corn Laws, and that we cannot form a correct idea of the price of grain when trade flows in its natural course. But this will not impair our argument. The noble Lord the Member for Lynn has anticipated this objection; and he says, "I will take rye, because that is the food of the continental people, and cannot be influenced by our Corn Laws, and I will show you equal fluctuations in the price of rye." Now, Sir, I also have a return of the prices of rye at Warsaw and at Dantzic. We have been told to-night that Dantzic is in favour of a fluctuating scale; but that at Warsaw they are devoted to free trade. Yet the difference in the annual price of rye during the years from 1834 to 1839, in the market at Warsaw, sometimes amounted to 149 per cent., whereas in Dantzic the difference was only 65 per cent. In all the great Prussian markets the difference during the same

period between the annual prices of rye was 100 per cent. I think, therefore, we may fairly conclude that the objection urged against the system of graduated protection, with regard to its producing fluctuation in prices, is no longer an argument for this House. But I must remind the House that the instances which I have adduced, and the inferences which I have drawn from these instances, are under the influence of the late law—a law much more tending to fluctuation than the present. The scale of the late law was originally well devised. It was planned by Mr. Canning, but altered for the worse; let it always be remembered, altered for the worse by the present First Minister. If I had taken the experience of the present scale, the result would have been still more favourable; but the result being favourable enough, I am content with the former scale. It seems, therefore, that some arguments have been abandoned by hon. Gentlemen opposite as well as by us. It is possible that both sides may have abandoned many important opinions without losing faith in the principles on which their respective systems are upheld. But I defy Gentlemen opposite, who have had for years such free warren of sarcasm against the advocates of protection, to bring forward a catalogue of renounced opinions on the subject which can compete with the one I have sketched, and yet left imperfect, before the House. What then are we to do with these opinions, these exhausted arguments, these exploded fallacies? Our great poet conceived the existence of a limbo for exploded systems and the phantasies of the schools. I think we ought to invent a limbo for political economists, where we might hang up all those arguments that have served their purpose, and which have turned out to be sophistries. Yes; but these are the arguments that have agitated a nation, and have converted a Ministry. It is all very well to say, after six or seven years' discussion, "We have discovered them to be false, and there is not a single Gentleman opposite prepared to maintain them;" but these are the agencies by which a certain amount of public opinion has been brought to bear on great economical questions; that public opinion has changed the policy of a Government, and, according to our belief, is perilling the destinies of a great people. Now, Sir, I must fairly acknowledge that one of these fallacies must be resuscitated by myself. Notwithstanding the high au-

thority of the Secretary at War—notwithstanding the influential adhesion to his opinion of the still higher authority of the Member for Stockport, I must raise on this occasion the cry of “cheap bread.” I do believe the effect of the present Corn Law is to raise the price of the necessities of life to the community. That is my opinion. But I believe, and I think I can show, that they increase in an infinitely greater ratio the purchasing powers by the community of the necessities of life. I hope I am meeting the argument fairly. The Secretary of State did me the honour to say that I had, on another occasion, fairly expressed the question at issue, and I wish strictly to address myself to it. Now, how am I to prove my proposition? The first witness I shall call is a high authority. It is a work circulated under the immediate influence of that great commercial confederation, the power of which is acknowledged—written, I believe, by a gentleman who was once a Member of this House, and I believe I may add, who would have been a Member of this House now if I had not had the pleasure of beating him in the first election I won—Colonel Thompson. In his *Corn Law Catechism* it is maintained that the Corn Law is a tax upon the community, because, assuming a certain number of quarters of corn are produced every year in this country, say, for instance, fifty millions of quarters, the Corn Law, by artificially raising the price of that corn 8s. or 10s. per quarter on an average, acts as a tax on the community, we will say, of 20,000,000*l*. Another economist, an equally celebrated and more successful free trader, has fallen foul of the calculations of this work, which is a great authority with the Anti-Corn-Law League, and he has shown the gallant calculator that he has omitted to deduct the number of quarters that are required for seed, for the sustenance of the agriculturists themselves, for the support of their horses, and so at once the critic cuts down the estimate of the Colonel to a tax of nine or ten millions on the public. But I will give, as is my custom, an advantage to my opponents, and take the first calculation. The conclusion of the Colonel, and of the school of which he is so distinguished a champion, is, that it is better for England not to raise a single quarter of corn, and then the whole of this tax might thus be saved. You will say this is an extreme statement; but the statement is not mine, and an extreme case tests the truth of a principle. Let us

suppose, then, that England imports 50,000,000 of quarters of corn—let us suppose that she thus saves ten or twenty millions of taxation. We will admit it for the purpose of discussion. But you cannot deny that England has lost the wages of labour that would have produced those fifty millions of quarters; you cannot deny that England has lost the profits of the capital that would have been invested in the production of those fifty millions of quarters; you cannot deny that England has lost the rent that this cultivation would have afforded after paying these wages of labour, and furnishing these profits of capital. What is their united amount? It would be a light estimate to place it at twenty times that of the imaginary tax. In the proportion that united amount bears to the assumed tax, the purchasing power of the community created by the law exceeds the tax on the community alleged to be occasioned by the law. I am ready to acknowledge that the hon. Member for Stockport never addressed any public assembly with these opinions. He is a practical man—he knows very well there is no chance of changing the laws of England with abstract doctrines, and he says very properly, “I don’t admit your conclusion—we don’t suppose any land will be thrown out of cultivation. There may be a reduction of price or not; but what we say is, you are creating that artificial price for the first necessities of life in the country, and you are creating that artificial price for the benefit of a class; and, therefore, the reduction of price is, at the worst, the destruction of rent.” That is the position he takes up. Now, for my own part, I will admit that I see no difference between a territorial class and the handloom weavers. If you show me that there is a law kept up merely to give a revenue to any class in this country, and that by putting an end to that law the great body of the people can be fed better and as well employed, I cannot imagine anything like a Corn Law can be maintained. Well, then, we are brought to the gist of the question. Will this change occasion a great displacement of labour? And if so, can you supply new employment for those who are displaced? It seems to me, Sir, impossible to arrive at any conclusion on this head, unless we form some estimate of the probable price of corn in this country after the measures of the Ministers have fairly come into play. It is in vain to make this inquiry of the right

hon. Gentleman, and therefore we must be thrown on our elements of calculation. If we can show to you that for the future the price of corn must necessarily be such as to render it impossible in the greater part of this country to cultivate wheat or other grain with a profit, you must acknowledge there will be a great displacement of labour. We will endeavour to meet you with facts, and protest against your answering us with assumptions. I will not trouble the House by referring to those countries whose names have been so long familiar in these debates. If I allude to them, it is only because I do not wish the House to suppose that I depreciate the productive power of those countries. My hon. Friend the Member for Somersetshire said, that the surplus produce of Russia was 28,000,000 quarters of corn, whereupon the Secretary of State rose to express his incredulity amid the sympathizing derision of Gentlemen opposite. Why, Sir, the authority for that statement is the officer of the Government, the functionary who is employed by you to analyse the tariffs and resources of foreign countries; and probably the Secretary of State is the Minister who laid his Report on the Table of the House. The authority is Mr. M'Gregor. I allude to it in passing, not that I value the authority of Mr. M'Gregor a rush; but it is right that it should be known that the statement of my hon. Friend was derived from your own blue books, and prepared by one of your own officers. What is the object of publishing these blue books, except to furnish us with the elements of opinion? I will not, however, enter into the empire of all the Russias; I know that it contains about seventy principalities—that more than one of them has an area greater than the United Kingdom—and that every one produces corn. I cannot forget the rich valley of the Wolga, or the exuberant plains of the Ukraine. I won't take you to the valley of the Mississippi, though I have a statement here made by a high authority on this subject, who declares that its produce may be indefinitely extended, and that its wheat can be supplied, with a high estimate for freight, in London at 30s. per quarter. But what I wish to bring before the notice of the House are the markets that are never mentioned, but which, I believe, will exercise a great influence on the price of corn. There is one market which has never been mentioned in the course of these discussions, and that is

Hungary. Hungary is a plain which consists of 36,000 English square miles. It is the richest soil in the world—the soil of a garden, varying in depth from one foot to seven feet. You may go hundreds of miles together and not find a stone in it. If you deduct one-third of that area for morasses, there are 24,000 square miles of the most fertile soil in the world, under the influence of a climate admirably adapted to the growth of corn. I have had a return sent to me of the production of one province in 1844, 12,000,000 bushels; in Croatia the produce was 1,500,000 quarters. Yet thousands upon thousands of acres are uncultivated. But, hon. Gentlemen will say, how are we to get this corn from Hungary? That is what I am going to tell you. Here is a letter from the greatest corn merchant in Hungary. He lives at Sissek on the Saave, the great depôt of the corn trade of that country. I will not give you the prices of this year, which is a year of scarcity, but I will give you the average of the last five years. An English quarter of Hungarian wheat, which, it should be remembered, ranks with the highest classes of Dantzic wheats, costs in English money from 18s. to 20s. per quarter. It is sent from Sissek by the river Kulpa to Carlstadt for 4d. per quarter, and from Carlstadt by land to Fiume for 1s. 8d. per quarter. The person who gives me this information is a practical man. He says, "Only give me a regular trade with England, and I will send you from Sissek 500,000 quarters in the first year." I will soon show you what is the effect of a steady market on increased supply and decreased price. I will take another market—a very interesting one—that of the Danubian provinces. In the year 1842, at the two ports of the Danube, Galatz and Ibrail, there were 1,350 ships laden with the produce of those countries, and only eight of them were English. That is a remarkable fact. We are the greatest commercial country in the world; and yet in an active scene of commerce, where an almost absolute freedom of trade is enjoyed, it appears by a return dated since the accession of the present Government to office, that out of 1,350 merchant ships laden in the two ports of the Danube, only eight were English. A house at Galatz has written to a house in England on the subject of supplying this country with corn, and the writer says—

"I will undertake to lay down, if secured a

price of 18s. per quarter, in any English port, 200,000 quarters of wheat, from this particular district, at 28s. to 30s., but if you will secure me a certain market I will double that quantity next year."

From the same place another house asserts that if you will ensure a regular trade they can supply 1,000,000 quarters of wheat at 18s. per quarter; and if this measure passes, they undertake, at the end of seven years, that that quantity shall be doubled and sent to England at a reduced price. I speak of mercantile letters, and can give hon. Gentlemen opposite the names of the firms. I feel I must not dwell too long on this point; but yet, under the head of unenumerated markets, which have not been the subject of discussion in the House, I may mention Spain—which will act greatly on this country—Egypt, and Sicily. Each of these countries, when the new measures are fairly in play, will be able, I believe, to furnish this country with as much corn as they have required in years of deficiency. My opinion is, that in exact proportion as your demand for wheat, and for various kinds of grain, increases, in the same proportion the price will diminish. I believe it may be laid down as a principle of commerce, that where an article can be progressively produced to an indefinite extent, precisely as the demand increases the price will decrease. I am aware that that is exactly contrary to the opinion of hon. Gentlemen opposite, and to the opinion of the Government. We have had it announced from the hustings, that exactly as you import a million of quarters of wheat from continental markets, prices abroad will rise 10s. per quarter. That which was announced by a great authority is only the echo of the Manchester school, and has been accepted by the Government. The hon. Member for Montrose stated the other night, that the result of these contemplated changes was only to equalize prices—we shall equalize prices by the demand, but we shall not lower prices. The gist of the question is the accuracy of this opinion. Is it true? The question whether England can maintain her character as an agricultural country—the question whether her people can be employed as they have been—the question whether there will be a great displacement of labour, depends upon the accuracy of this opinion. I referred on a former occasion to the instance of tea. I said in that case that an increased demand had decreased the price.

That intimation was received rather incredulously. It was not met by any argument or decided fact; but subsequently it was contradicted, and in a very unsatisfactory manner. I will now show the House how far I was justified in that statement. I wrote to a mercantile house which is more largely connected with the China trade than any other house in the country. I placed before them the assertion I had made, and the reply it had met. What was the answer I received? Here it is:—

"I hand you enclosed the prices per lb. of sound common congou tea, which is the kind most consumed in this country, from which you will be able to observe that there has been a great fall in the price since the year 1831."

What, then, was that fall in price per lb. of congou tea—the sort most consumed in this country? In the year 1831 congou tea was 2s. 2d. per lb.; in the year 1846 it is 9d. per lb. I know very well that the price of tea in 1831 was, to a certain degree, artificial. The mercantile influence of the East India Company still prevailed, and the supply was limited. But that influence was not greater than that of the China war, and, it will be observed, those disturbances only affected the market for a couple of years. In 1832, tea was 2s. 1½d.; in 1833, 1s. 11d.; 1834, 1s. 7½d.; 1835, 1s. 4d.; 1836, 1s. 1d.; 1837, 1s. 7d.; 1838, 1s. 2d. And then we come to the disorders in China, which had the effect of raising the price in 1839 to 2s. 5d.; it then fell in 1842 to 1s. 3½d.; 1843, to 11d.; 1844, to 10d.; in 1845, to 9½d.; until, in 1846, we find it reduced to 9d. per lb.; and all this time the import of tea from that country, which, from its being solely produced there, enjoys a *quasi* monopoly, was increasing by millions of pounds. And then, Sir, I am told that by the last accounts from Canton the price of tea is rising; and that is called an answer. Why, Sir, if by the last accounts from Canton the prices of tea had been falling, I should not have adduced that as an argument in favour of the principle I am upholding. The price of tea will fall, and will rise, according to the circumstance of the market; there must always be undulation in price. But the question is, what, if I may use the expression, is the gradient of price, what the inevitable and unmistakable tendency of price during a series of years? The next instance I shall take is one which is more favourable to our case, but, at the same time, strictly legitimate. It is one which bears

more analogy to corn—namely, cotton. The price of cotton, upland, per lb., in the year 1836 was $10\frac{1}{2}d.$; in 1837, $8d.$; 1838, $8\frac{1}{2}d.$; 1839, $6\frac{1}{2}d.$; 1840, $6\frac{1}{2}d.$; 1841, $5\frac{1}{2}d.$; 1842, $5\frac{1}{2}d.$; 1843, $5\frac{1}{2}d.$; 1844, $4\frac{1}{2}d.$; and in 1845, from $4d.$ to $4\frac{1}{2}d.$ per lb.; and in those ten years of progressive fall in price the import of cotton into England had risen from 350,000,000 lbs. to 597,000,000 lbs., while during the same period of a falling price other manufacturing countries, including the United States, had increased their consumption of that article from 282,000,000 lbs. to 439,000,000 lbs. It seems therefore to be demonstrable that where there is no natural or artificial cause to check the progress of production, price will proportionately fall. Now, in the article I am about to refer to, there are these causes in operation, and the whole state of the sugar trade is so anomalous, that I might fairly have omitted it from the application of the test. But it occurred to me that it might be tried with reference to the production of East India sugar since the duties were equalized. What is the result; At the end of the year 1841, the price of brown Bengal sugar was $47s.$ to $52s.$; 1842, $45s.$ to $51s.$; 1843, $47s.$ to $55s.$; 1844, $39s.$ to $49s.$; 1845, $38s.$ to $42s.$; 1846, $37s.$ to $42s.$; and with that falling price the amount imported increased from 24,000 tons in the first year to 62,000 tons in the last year. With respect to the finest kinds of the same sugar, the price fell from $69s.$ to $74s.$ down to $52s.$ to $56s.$ during the same period. Therefore the instance of sugar is in perfect harmony with the general and ruling principle I have laid down. The case of coffee I find to be still more satisfactory. I must apply my rule again to East India production in this case, owing to the anomalous state of our West India Colonies. Let us then take Ceylon coffee, and we shall find that the importation has greatly increased. The price of that article in 1840 was, per bag, $90s.$ to $91s.$; in 1846 it fell to $44s.$; and in the first year the quantity imported was 53,000 bags; in the last year 133,000 bags. Then take the case of Mysore coffee during the same time. In the first year the price was $70s.$ to $80s.$ per cask; in the last year $36s.$ to $48s.$ per cask; the quantity imported in the former year being 48,000 casks; in the latter 63,530. There are many other important articles which it would be wearisome to refer to in detail, but which I mention

that Gentlemen may have an opportunity of investigating this important principle. Look at the instances of indigo, salt, iron, coal, and fruits, ever since the alteration of the law, and you will find this principle is invariably observed, universally demonstrated. Well, Sir, is it then unreasonable for me to ask what there is in corn to make it an exception to this general rule? I want that question to be answered. It is a fair question. Why, I repeat, is corn to be an exception to this rule? Is it because corn is produced in every country and under every clime? I want to know where it is you will not produce corn. We have had by late arrivals accounts of the price of wheat in Persia, where we find it is at present $5s.$ per quarter. True, you can't very easily import corn from Persia; but there are countries lying at each point of the compass from Persia where you may purchase corn at from $10s.$ to $20s.$ per quarter. The rest is an affair of the cost of transport, in an age when the principle of locomotion is bringing all articles to a level. Now, Sir, before I estimate the consequences of these proposed changes, I will first advert to the parallel which has been so often drawn between the importation of foreign corn and foreign cattle, in order to show how ill-founded may be our fears. It does not appear to me that there is much analogy between these two instances, which are always treated as the same. In the first place, continental countries have been corn-growing countries long before England became so. But they have never been to any extent cattle-feeding countries. The very fact of the prevalence in them of the Roman Catholic religion, which prevented the consumption of meat to the same extent as in Protestant countries, alone has discouraged it. Besides, the pastures of England have always, even in old days, been unrivalled. Nor should we forget the difficulty and danger of transport in the commerce of live stock. It appears, therefore, that the analogy between these cases is very imperfect. I say, then, assuming, as I have given you reason to assume, that the price of wheat, when this system is established, ranges in England at $35s.$ per quarter, and other grain in proportion, this is not a question of rent, but it is a question of displacing the labour of England that produces corn, in order, on an extensive and even universal scale, to permit the entrance into this country of foreign corn produced by foreign labour. Will that displaced la-

bour find new employment? The Secretary of State says, that England is no longer an agricultural but a commercial and manufacturing country; and the right hon. Gentleman, when reminded by the noble Lord the Member for Gloucestershire, of his words, said, "No, I did not say that; but I said that England was no longer exclusively an agricultural country." Why, Sir, the commerce of England is not a creation of yesterday: it is more ancient than that of any other existing country. This is a novel assumption on the part of the Government to tell us that England has hitherto been a strictly agricultural country, and that now there is a change, and that it is passing into a commercial and manufacturing country. I doubt whether, in the first place, England is a greater commercial country now than she has been at other periods of her history. I do not mean to say that she has not now more commercial transactions, but that with reference to her population, and the population of the world, her commerce is not now greater than at other periods of her history; for example, when she had her great Levantine trade, when the riches of the world collected in the Mediterranean, when she had her great Turkey merchants, her flourishing Antilles, and her profitable, though in some degree surreptitious, trade with the Spanish main. But then it is also said that England has become a great manufacturing country. I believe, Sir, if you look to the general distribution of labour in England, you will find she may be less of a manufacturing country now than she has been. Well, I give you my argument; answer it if you can. I say, looking to the employment of the people, manufacturing industry was more scattered over the country a hundred years ago than it is now. Hon. Gentlemen have laid hold of a word uttered in the heat of speaking. I say manufacturing industry was more dispersed over the country then than now—there were more counties in which manufactures flourished then than at the present moment. For instance, in the west of England, manufactures were more flourishing, and your woollen manufacture bore a greater ratio in importance to the industrial skill of Europe 300 years ago than it does to the aggregate industry of Europe at the present moment. That manufacture might not have been absolutely more important; but as a development of the national industry, it bore a greater relative importance to the industry of Europe then

than at the present moment. You had then considerable manufactures in various counties—manufactures a hundred years ago which are now obsolete, or but partially pursued. You have no doubt now a gigantic development of manufacturing skill in a particular county which is unprecedented. It is one of those developments which confer the greatest honour on this country, which has been a great source of public wealth, a development of which Englishmen should be justly proud. But, generally speaking, it is confined to one county; and now Ministers tell us we must change our whole system, because, forsooth, England has ceased to be an agricultural country, and has become a commercial and manufacturing one. That is to say, that we must change our whole system in favour of one particular county. Sir, that is an extremely dangerous principle to introduce. I have heard of a repeal of the Union, but we may live to hear of a revival of the Heph-tarchy, if Her Majesty's Ministers pursue this policy; if those portions of the country which are agricultural, or suffering under the remains of an old obsolete manufacturing population, are to be told that we must change our whole system because one county where there is a peculiar development of one branch of industry demands it. But what are the resources of this kind of industry to employ and support the people, supposing the great depression in agricultural produce occur which is feared—that this great revolution, as it has appropriately been called, takes place—that we cease to be an agricultural people—what are the resources that would furnish employment to two-thirds of the subverted agricultural population—in fact, from 3,500,000 to 4,000,000 of people? Assume that the workshop of the world principle is carried into effect—assume that the attempt is made to maintain your system, both financial and domestic, on the resources of the cotton trade—assume that, in spite of hostile tariffs, that already gigantic industry is doubled—a bold assumption, even if there be no further improvements in machinery, further reducing the necessity of manual labour—you would only find increased employment for 300,000 of your population. Perhaps mechanical invention may reduce the number half, and those only women and children. What must be the consequence? I think we have pretty good grounds for anticipating social misery and political disaster. But, then, I am told, immense things are to be done for the

agriculturist by the application of capital and skill. Let us test the soundness of this doctrine. When a man lends his capital, he looks to the security he is to have, and to what is to pay the interest. Is the complexion of these measures such as to render men more ready to lend money on landed estates? The mortgagee, when he advances money on land, looks to the margin in the shape of rent for his security. Will any man rise and maintain that the tendency of these measures is to increase that margin? But you are not only diminishing the opportunity of obtaining loans upon your own estates, but you are creating for capital an investment which will be more profitable for it in the estates of the foreigner. Look at the relations in which you will place the foreign merchant with his London correspondent. He has no longer to fear the capricious effects of the sliding scale: he has got a certain market; he goes to his London banker with an increased security for an advance; he obtains his loan with ease; he makes his advances to the country dealers on the Continent as he makes his advance of English capital now in the foreign wool trade, before the clip and the great fairs; and thus, while you diminish the security of the landed proprietor, you are offering to the English capitalist a better and securer investment. But then you tell us of the aid to be had by the agriculturist from skill. It is not easy to argue on a phrase so indefinite as skill; but I think I can show you that the English agriculturist is far more advanced, in respect to skill, than even the English manufacturer. I don't mean to say that there are not English farmers who might cultivate their lands better and with more economy than they do; but the same may surely be said, in their respective pursuits, of many a manufacturer and many a miner; but what I mean to say is, that an English farmer produces more effectively and wastes less—is more industrious and more intelligent than the manufacturer. I will prove this by the evidence of a member of the Anti-Corn-Law League—Mr. Greg. Mr. Greg says, that the competition is so severe that he almost doubts the possibility of the English manufacturer long maintaining that competition with the Continental or American manufacturer, who approach them nearer every day in the completeness of their fabrics and the economy of their productions. But no such thing can be said of the English agriculturist, who, I have shown you, can produce

much more per bushel than the French, Russian, or American agriculturist. So much, then, for the argument with respect to skill. There is one argument, or rather appeal, which I know has influenced opinion out of this House, and also within it. You bring before us the condition of the English peasant. It is too often a miserable condition. My hon. Friend the member for Shaftesbury has gained, and deserves, great credit for investigating the condition of the Dorsetshire labourer. He has introduced it into this discussion. Now, the condition of the Dorsetshire labourer is one of the reasons which induce me to support this law. It is very easy to say that the condition of the agricultural labourer, when compared with the general state of our civilization, is a miserable and depressed one, and that protection has produced it. If I cannot offer you reasons which may induce you to believe that protection has had nothing to do with it, I shall be perfectly ready to go to-night into the same lobby with Her Majesty's Ministers. I asked you the other night, if protection has produced the Dorsetshire labourer at 7s. per week, how is it that protection has produced the Lincolnshire labourer with double that sum? I do not say that is an argument. It is a suggestive question, which I will endeavour to follow up. Mr. Huskisson made an observation, in conversation with an acquaintance of mine, which has always struck me very forcibly. When Mr. Huskisson first settled in Sussex, his attention was naturally drawn to the extraordinary state of pauperism in that county; and after giving the subject all the meditation of his acute mind, he said that he traced it to the fact, that Sussex had formerly been the seat of a great iron trade, and that agriculture had never been able to absorb the manufacturing population. Now, apply that principle to the western counties, and don't you think it will throw some light upon their condition? They also have been the seats of manufactures—many of them obsolete, and many of them now only partially pursued. There, too, you will find that the manufacturing population has never been absorbed by the agricultural—that is, agriculture does not bear its ratio in its means of support to the amount of the population which it has to sustain, but which it did not create. And now go to Lincolnshire. I will rest our case on Lincolnshire. It is a new county; it is a protected county. Lincolnshire is to agricul-

ture what Lancashire is to manufactures. The population there is produced by land and supported by land, in the same manner that the population of Lancashire has been produced and supported by manufactures. Let us picture to ourselves for a moment that celebrated tower that looks over that city, which my gallant Friend and his ancestors have represented since the time of the last Stuart. Let us picture him for a moment placing the arch-fiend of political economy in that benefiting niche, and calling his attention to the surrounding landscape. To the north, extending to the Humber, an endless tract of wolds, rescued from the rabbits, once covered with furze and whins, and now with exuberant crops of grain; to the south, stretching for miles, is what was once Lincoln Heath, where in the memory of living men there used to be a lighthouse for the traveller, and which, even in the recollection of the middle-aged, was let to the warrener at 2s. 6d. an acre, now one of the best-farmed and most productive corn districts in the kingdom. Then turning from the wolds and the heaths eastward, reaching to the sea, he might behold a region of fens, the small ones drained by the steam-engine, with the East and West and Wildmere Fens, once more than half of the year under water, now cleared by large canals, and bearing magnificent wheats and oats; with the great Witham and Black Sluice drainage districts, one extending over 60,000 and the other 90,000 acres, admirably reclaimed and drained, and bearing and creating and well sustaining a large and industrious and thriving population. And all under the faith of Protective Acts of Parliament. I am told that it is the contiguity of manufactures that makes Lincolnshire so prosperous. But, Sir, the frontiers of Wilts are nearer that great manufacturing district of which Birmingham is the centre, than those of Lincolnshire are to Lancashire. Now, see what Lincolnshire has produced under protection. There you see the protective system fairly tested. But when you find the labourers in the western counties wretched and miserable, do not say that protection has been the cause of it, when protection is, perhaps, the reason why they exist at all; but see if you cannot find other causes for their poverty and means to counteract it. I must say, that nothing astonished me more than when the noble Lord the Member for Falkirk asked the farmers in New-

ark market, "What has protection done for you?" Why, that market is supplied with the wheat of Lincoln Heath, the intrinsic poverty of whose soil is only sustained by the annual application of artificial manures, but which produces the finest corn in the kingdom. What has protection done for them? Why, if protection had never existed, Lincolnshire might still have been a wild wold, a barren heath, a plashy marsh. There are one or two points to which I could have wished to call the attention of the House, but which time will only permit me to glance at. I will not presume to discuss them. But you cannot decide this question without looking to your Colonies. I am not one of those who think it the inevitable lot of the people of Canada to become annexed to the United States. Canada has all the elements of a great and independent country, and is destined, I sometimes believe, to be the Russia of the new world. The hon. and learned Member for Bath, in answering the speech of the noble Lord the Member for Lynn, last night, treated our commerce with Canada very lightly, rather as a smuggling traffic than legitimate commerce. That is an argument for keeping the Canadas. I have no desire to see a smuggling trade if we can have any other. But I will ask the gentlemen of Manchester to consider what may become of the trans-Atlantic market for their manufactures, if the whole of that continent belong to one Power? But I must not dwell on the Colonies, and I shall scarcely touch the case of Ireland. It is too terrible, especially if there be truth in the opinion of the noble Lord, whose conversion has been so much a matter of congratulation to the Government, that their measure must be fatal to small farmers. Why Ireland is a nation of small farmers. There was, however, one observation made with respect to Ireland by the hon. Member for Stockport, which, considering the effect it has had, I cannot help noticing. The hon. Gentleman says, "Ireland an argument in favour of the Corn Laws! Of all countries in the world I never should have supposed that Ireland would have been brought forward in support of the Corn Laws." That is a saucy and gallant sally; but is it an argument? what does it prove? The population is reduced to the lowest sources of subsistence. Admitted; but how do they gain even their potatoes except by cultivating the soil, and by producing that wheat and those oats which they send to Eng-

land? I should be very glad if that wheat and those oats remained in Ireland; but I ask, what will be the state of Ireland if the effect of this measure on your markets be such as I have assumed? You say that capital will flow into the country, and manufactures will be established. What length of time will elapse before these manufactures are established? Perhaps before that time the iron trade will revive in Sussex, or we shall see the drooping energies of the Dorsetshire labourer revived by his receiving the same wages as are paid at Rochdale and Stockport. Believing that this measure would be fatal to our agricultural interests—believing that its tendency is to sap the elements and springs of our manufacturing prosperity—believing that in a merely financial point of view it will occasion a new distribution of the precious metals, which must induce the utmost social suffering in every class, I am obliged to ask myself, if the measure be so perilous, why is it produced? Sir, I need not ask what so many Gentlemen both in and out of this House have already asked, what was there in the circumstances of this country to authorize the change? If we are only a commercial and manufacturing people, all must admit that commerce was thriving and that manufactures flourished. Agriculture was also content; and even had it been suffering and depressed, what does it signify, since England has ceased to be an agricultural country? Obligated, then, to discover some cause for this social revolution, I find that a body of men have risen in this country, eminent for their eloquence, distinguished for their energy, but more distinguished, in my humble opinion, for their energy and their eloquence than for their knowledge of human nature, or for the extent of their political information. Sir, I am not one of those who, here or elsewhere, in public or in private, have spoken with that disrespect which some have done of that great commercial confederation which now exercises so great an influence in this country. Though I disapprove of their doctrines—though I believe from the bottom of my heart that their practice will eventually be as pernicious to the manufacturing interest as to the agricultural interests of this country, still I admire men of abilities who, convinced of a great truth, and proud of their energies, band themselves together for the purpose of supporting it, and come forward, devoting their lives to what they consider to be

a great cause. Sir, this country can only exist by free discussion. If it is once supposed that opinions are to be put down by any other means, then, whatever may be our political forms, liberty vanishes. If we think the opinions of the Anti-Corn-Law League are dangerous—if we think their system is founded on error, and must lead to confusion—it is open in a free country like England for men who hold opposite ideas to resist them with the same earnestness, by all legitimate means—by the same active organization, and by all the intellectual power they command. But what happens in this country? A body of gentlemen, able and adroit men, come forward, and profess contrary doctrines to those of these new economists. They place themselves at the head of that great popular party who are adverse to the new ideas, and, professing their opinions, they climb and clamber into power by having accepted, or rather by having eagerly sought the trust. It follows that the body whom they represent, trusting in their leaders, not unnaturally slumber at their posts. They conclude that their opinions are represented in the State. It was not for us, or the millions out of the House, to come forward and organize a power, in order to meet the hostile movements of the hon. Member for Stockport. No, we trusted to others—to one who by accepting, or rather by seizing that post, obtained the greatest place in the country, and at this moment governs England. Well, Sir, what happens? The right hon. Gentleman, the First Minister, told his Friends that he had given them very significant hints of the change of his opinions. He said that even last year Lord Grey had found him out, and he was surprised that we could have been so long deluded. Sir, none of the observations of the right hon. Gentleman applied to me. More than a year ago I rose in my place and said, that it appeared to me that protection was in about the same state as Protestantism was in 1828. I remember my Friends were very indignant with me for that assertion, but they have since been so kind as to observe that instead of being a calumny it was only a prophecy. But I am bound to say, from personal experience, that, with the very humble exception to which I have referred, I think the right hon. Baronet may congratulate himself on his complete success in having entirely deceived his party, for even the noble Lord, the Member for Lynn, himself, in a moment of frank conversation, assured me

that he had not till the very last moment the slightest doubt of the right hon. Gentleman. The noble Lord, I suppose, like many others, thought that the right hon. Gentleman was, to use a very favourite phrase on these benches in 1842, "only making the best bargain for them." I remember, when the Whig budget was rejected, and the right hon. Gentleman was installed into office, the changes which he proposed at the time created some suspicion; but all suspicion was hushed at the moment, because the right hon. Gentleman was looked upon as the man who could make the "best bargain" for the party. I want to know what Gentlemen think of their best bargain now? Suddenly, absolute as was the confidence in the right hon. Gentleman, the announcement was made that there was to be another change; that that was to occur under his auspices, which, only a few months before, he had aptly described as a "social revolution." And how was that announcement made? Were hon. Gentlemen called together, or had the influential Members of either House any intimation given to them of the nature of it? No, Sir. It was announced through the columns of a journal which is always careful never to insert important information except on the highest authority. Conceive the effect of that announcement on foreign countries, and on foreign Ministers. I can bear witness to it. I happened to be absent from England at the time, and I know of great potentates sending for English ambassadors, and demanding an explanation; and of English ambassadors waiting on great potentates, and officially declaring that there was not the slightest truth in the announcement. And all this time, too, Members of the Government—I have some of them in my eye—were calling on other newspapers devoted to the Government, and instructing them to announce that the whole was an "infamous fabrication." How ingenuous was the conduct of Her Majesty's Government—or of that Minister who formed the omnipotent minority of the Cabinet, I leave the House to decide. But was it not strange that, after so much agitation, after all these schemes, after all these Machiavellian manœuvres, when the Minister at last met the House and his party, he acted as if we had deserted him, instead of his having left us? Who can forget those tones? Who can forget that indignant glance?

"Vectabor humeris tunc ego inimicis eques;
Mæquo terra cedit insolentia;"

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which means to say, "I, a protectionist Minister, mean to govern England by the aid of the Anti-Corn-Law League. And, as for the country gentlemen, why, I snap my fingers in their face." Yet even then the right hon. Gentleman had no cause to complain of his party. It is very true that, on a subsequent occasion, 240 Gentlemen recorded their sense of his conduct. But then he might have remembered the considerable section of converts that he obtained even in the last hour. Why, what a compliment to a Minister—not only to vote for him, but to vote for him against your opinions, and in favour of opinions which he had always drilled you to distrust. That was a scene, I believe, unprecedented in the House of Commons. Indeed, I recollect nothing equal to it, unless it be the conversion of the Saxons by Charlemagne, which is the only historical incident that bears any parallel to that illustrious occasion. Ranged on the banks of the Rhine, the Saxons determined to resist any further movement on the part of the great Cæsar; but when the Emperor appeared, instead of conquering he converted them. How were they converted? In battalions—the old chronicler informs us they were converted in battalions, and baptized in platoons. It was utterly impossible to bring these individuals from a state of reprobation to a state of grace with a celerity sufficiently quick. When I saw the hundred and twelve fall into rank and file, I was irresistibly reminded of that memorable incident on the banks of the Rhine. And now, Sir, I must say, in vindication of the right hon. Gentleman, that I think great injustice has been done to him throughout these debates. A perhaps justifiable misconception has universally prevailed. Sir, the right hon. Gentleman has been accused of foregone treachery—of long meditated deception—of a desire unworthy of a great statesman, even if an unprincipled one—of always having intended to abandon the opinions by professing which he rose to power. Sir, I entirely acquit the right hon. Gentleman of any such intention. I do it for this reason: that when I examine the career of this Minister, which has now filled a great space in the Parliamentary history of this country, I find that for between thirty and forty years, from the days of Mr. Horner to the days of the hon. Member for Stockport, that right hon. Gentleman has traded on the ideas and intelligence of others. His life has been

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one great appropriation clause. He is a burglar of others' intellect. Search the Index of Beatson, from the days of the Conqueror to the termination of the last reign, there is no statesman who has committed political petty larceny on so great a scale. I believe, therefore, when the right hon. Gentleman undertook our cause on either side of the House, that he was perfectly sincere in his advocacy; but as, in the course of discussion, the conventionalisms which he received from us crumbled away in his grasp, feeling no creative power to sustain him with new arguments, feeling no spontaneous sentiments to force upon him conviction, the right hon. Gentleman, reduced at last to defending the noblest cause, one based on the most high and solemn principles, upon the "burdens peculiar to agriculture"—the right hon. Gentleman, faithful to the law of his nature, imbibed the new doctrines, the more vigorous, bustling, popular and progressive doctrines, as he had imbibed the doctrines of Mr. Horner—as he had imbibed the doctrines of every leading man in this country, for thirty or forty years, with the exception of the doctrine of Parliamentary reform, which the Whigs very wisely led the country upon, and did not allow to grow sufficiently mature to fall into the mouth of the right hon. Gentleman. Sir, the right hon. Gentleman tells us, that he does not feel humiliated. Sir, it is impossible for any one to know what are the feelings of another. Feeling depends upon temperament; it depends upon the idiosyncrasy of the individual; it depends upon the organization of the animal that feels. But this I will tell the right hon. Gentleman, that though he may not feel humiliated, his country ought to feel humiliated. Is it so pleasing to the self-complacency of a great nation, is it so grateful to the pride of England, that one who, from the position he has contrived to occupy, must rank as her foremost citizen, is one of whom it may be said, as Dean Swift said of another Minister, that "he is a Gentleman who has the perpetual misfortune to be mistaken!" And, Sir, even now, in this last scene of the drama, when the party whom he unintentionally betrayed is to be unintentionally annihilated—even now, in this the last scene, the right hon. Gentleman, faithful to the law of his being, is going to pass a project which, I believe it is matter of notoriety, is not of his own

invention. It is one which may have been modified, but which I believe has been offered to another Government, and by that Government has been wisely rejected. Why, Sir, these are matters of general notoriety. After the day that the right hon. Gentleman made his first exposition of his scheme, a gentleman well known in this House, and learned in all the political secrets behind the scenes, met me, and said, "Well, what do you think of your chief's plan?" Not knowing exactly what to say; but, taking up a phrase which has been much used in the House, I observed, "Well, I suppose it's a 'great and comprehensive' plan." "Oh!" he replied, "we know all about it! It was offered to us! It is not his plan; it's Popkins's plan!" And is England to be governed by "Popkins's plan?" Will he go to the country with it? Will he go with it to that ancient and famous England that once was governed by statesmen—by Burleighs and by Walsinghams; by Bolingbrokes and by Walpoles; by a Chatham and a Canning—will he go to it with this fantastic scheming of some presumptuous pedant? I won't believe it. I have that confidence in the common sense, I will say the common spirit of our countrymen, that I believe they will not long endure this buckstering tyranny of the Treasury Bench—these political pedlars that bought their party in the cheapest market, and sold us in the dearest. I know, Sir, that there are many who believe that the time is gone by when one can appeal to those high and honest impulses that were once the mainstay and the main element of the English character. I know, Sir, that we appeal to a people debauched by public gambling—stimulated and encouraged by an inefficient and short-sighted Minister. I know that the public mind is polluted with economic fancies; a depraved desire that the rich may become richer without the interference of industry and toil. I know, Sir, that all confidence in public men is lost. But, Sir, I have faith in the primitive and enduring elements of the English character. It may be vain now, in the midnight of their intoxication, to tell them that there will be an awakening of bitterness; it may be idle now, in the spring-tide of their economic frenzy, to warn them that there may be an ebb of trouble. But the dark and inevitable hour will arrive. Then, when their spirit is softened by misfortune, they will recur to those principles

that made England great, and which, in our belief, can alone keep England great. Then, too, perchance they may remember, not with unkindness, those who, betrayed and deserted, were neither ashamed nor afraid to struggle for the "good old cause"—the cause with which are associated principles the most popular, sentiments the most entirely national—the cause of labour—the cause of the people—the cause of England.

LORD J. RUSSELL: Sir, in rising to address the House after the hon. Gentleman who has just sat down, I confess I should certainly feel considerable hesitation at the task I undertook if I thought the hon. Gentleman was equally successful in his commercial theories, and his agricultural views, as he is powerful in invective against the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of the Crown, whom he accuses of having deserted his party. But how great is the contrast—how wide the difference—between the hon. Gentleman's talent for directing powerful invective against the Minister, and his success in proving that the Bill before the House is an injudicious, ill-judged measure! I can assure the House and the hon. Gentleman, however, that the business of to-night is, the question as to whether this Bill shall be read a third time, and not whether we shall pass a censure on the conduct of the First Minister of the Crown. I confess I feel much comfort in addressing the House after the hon. Gentleman; but I can promise him that this question, in which I am rather a spectator than an interested party, shall not be neglected by me so far as the public interests are concerned; if the House will allow me to continue my address to them till I come to allude to that part of the hon. Gentleman's speech. But to begin with the beginning—the hon. Gentleman began by alluding to the use of abandoned arguments, I do not think that this accusation of abandoned arguments need lie very heavy on the minds of the hon. Gentleman and his party; for their whole case rests on the repetition of some fifty or a hundred arguments which have been long ago disposed of till we supposed that they had become obsolete. Indeed I do not know that the whole case of the protectionists could be more accurately stated now than it has been in the language of an ancestor of the noble Lord who began this debate, in the year of our Lord 1608. And to this day they have not abandoned the same arguments. The

noble Lord's ancestor, in writing to his friend in 1610, spoke of wicked bakers, who contrived to raise the price of bread by certain means. I think that letter does contain, in its antique language, the whole argument now used by the protectionists, and to this day they have not abandoned the argument. But I did suppose that some of these old arguments—prejudices, I must call them—had been abandoned. The noble Lord's ancestor said, that in the year 1610 the wicked bakers were always raising the price of bread. Even this argument is not abandoned, for an hon. Member to-night has told us that potatoes in Yorkshire are cheap, and may be had for 2s. a bushel; but that the wicked potato factors in London will not sell them so cheaply; and the simple Yorkshiremen, (who I always thought were sufficiently alive to their own interest,) though they have potatoes in abundance, do not send them to a market where they can get ten times the price they obtain in the country. The protectionists may boast, therefore, that not one of the old arguments has been abandoned by them. The hon. Member said, that I have abandoned the doctrine that protection is the bane of agriculture. I have not abandoned that doctrine, for I consider that the agriculture of this country has been injured by protection. I do not deny that under that system there has been high cultivation in several parts of the country; but in other parts of the country cultivation is still in a backward state; and in those parts where there is good agriculture it dates only from six, or eight, or ten years ago; and my opinion is, that if protection had not been kept up, the agriculture of this country would have been much further advanced. If it must be admitted that within a few years agriculture has made enormous advances in this country, it must be also asserted they have not been equal to the progress of manufactures, and to the impulse we might expect to be given to agriculture from that cause, and from a great number of persons seeking to possess property, and to cultivate farms. It is not more than ten years since those great advances have been made. But the noble Lord who commenced this debate, asked me whether protection be not also the bane of manufacture; and I say it is. First, with respect to cotton and wool, the protection being insufficient—in point of fact inoperative—did no harm; but I say, wherever the protection has been an effectual protection—as

in the case of the Spitalfields weavers—that then manufactures have been injured. But suppose, instead of our having to alter the system of protection, that no such system had ever existed, and we bought our wheat and bread and manufactures as cheaply as we could, and imposed taxes solely for revenue; I should like to know what would be thought of a Minister who should come down to Parliament and say, “I have a great plan to propose, in order to promote the domestic industry of the country; I propose that you should pay dearer for the articles you consume; that you should pay a high price for your bread, and high prices for your coffee and your sugar.” Why, if that were the case, I believe that such a system, if proposed now for the first time, would be scouted at once, and not the authority of St. George himself, far less that of his namesake, would succeed in persuading the House to adopt it. But this is not a new thing proposed for the first time; it is an old system, and the question is, how it is to be changed; and I must beg the permission of the House—and I trust I address the House for the last time on this subject—I request their attention for a few minutes whilst I state what has been my course with respect to the Corn Laws for a number of years past. When I gave my support in the early part of my life to the principles of Mr. Huskisson, I considered him the soundest Minister, in his views respecting corn and commerce, the country ever had, and I never voted against him. But when I perceived the working of the Bill of 1828, and weighed the arguments and observations respecting that measure, as I thought that Bill was working injuriously to the country, I stated, first to Mr. Ricardo, and afterwards to the House, that my opinion had been changed in favour of a fixed duty; and I thought then that a permanent moderate fixed duty, such as had been advocated by Mr. Ricardo, of about 10s. a quarter, was the best system that could be adopted. In the year 1840, when the question was before brought before the House, I again stated my opinion in favour of a fixed duty; but I wish to show further, that that was not a solitary opinion, but also that of the Government to which I belonged. The greater portion of the Members of the Administration had stated the same opinion. In 1840 the question of the Corn Laws was brought before both Houses—in the House of Lords

by Lord Fitzwilliam—and on those two occasions eleven Members of Lord Melbourne’s Cabinet voted for a reconsideration of the Corn Laws: in the House of Lords for a resolution that it was expedient to reconsider them; and in this House for a Committee, I declaring that either myself or my right hon. Friend, then the President of the Board of Trade, would propose a fixed duty, if that Committee were granted. I said at that time that I thought the settlement of the Tithe question and the New Poor Law made a great difference as to the Corn question, and that a freer competition with foreign corn and foreign produce might be adopted with safety to British agriculture. There were two or three Members of the Cabinet who did not give any opinion on the subject; but of those who did, Lord Melbourne, the Prime Minister, and one other Member of the Cabinet, voted against any change. There was an opinion of Lord Melbourne’s given on the occasion, which has been so often referred to, that I beg to state what Lord Melbourne did say on the occasion. Referring to Lord Fitzwilliam, he said—

“The noble Earl proposes that it is neither expedient nor necessary to maintain the present Corn Laws. Now, although I am distinctly of opinion that it is expedient, yet I wish to guard myself against being supposed to be determined always to maintain the existing laws. I never pledged myself to that, nor do I mean to do so. It is no stubborn question of principle, and I will not pledge myself that various considerations of policy might not arise which would justify, if not render necessary, a different course.”

Now, with that opinion, so given by Lord Melbourne, while he voted against the proposed change, and four Members of the Cabinet in the other House and all those who were in this House declaring for the change, that was going as far in favour of a change in the Corn Laws as Mr. Canning ever went at the end of his life on the Catholic question. Then I say, after these facts in 1839 and 1840, that the whole Ministry as a united Cabinet should in 1841 propose a change in the Corn Laws was not surprising. Sir, I feel justified in thus troubling the House with this detail, because I know that it has been over and over again said, for years, that the proposal of 1841 was a sudden thought produced by the difficulties of the Ministry. The fact was, that we had long, as individual Members of the Government, been for a fixed duty; but then we for the first time proposed, as a Ministry, what we thought should be the amount of that fixed duty. I

have already said that if the circumstances of 1841 could come over again, I should still be of opinion that a moderate fixed duty would be the best change from the law of 1828. I was of opinion that when the laws of protection had not only been imbedded in your Statute-book, but also incorporated in the habits of your people, these changes should be made gradually, and with a general assent. I believe that the manufacturing interest and the Anti-Corn-Law League would then have been prepared to accept even an 8s. duty, although they would still have considered it a high duty. ["No, no!"] I have authority, good authority, for making that statement. Sir, from that time to the middle of last year I was still the advocate of a fixed duty, as being the best mode of changing the law. I considered, that after a fixed duty had lasted for a number of years, and a steady trade in corn had been the consequence, the change to free trade would be almost imperceptible, and that it would excite no panic or alarm. But, Sir, when those changes were obstinately resisted, when for seven years the association called the Anti-Corn-Law League had advocated this question, and had made the deepest impression on the public mind, the question bore no longer the same aspect. Having had the offer of a fixed duty rejected, there was not, from the days of the Sibyl down to the time when Mr. Canning threw over the proposed securities on the Catholic question, any precedent for repeating an offer that had been rejected. Therefore I had to consider last year, and I think I have to consider it now, whether there was anything short of the settlement proposed by the right hon. Baronet, resting on total repeal, which was likely to give satisfaction to the country, or to terminate the angry discussions on the question. Had I been able to carry a fixed duty with the general consent of both the manufacturing and agricultural interests, and with the concurrence of the great body of the people, I might have felt proud to accomplish that object. But to be placed in the situation of defending a duty which could scarcely be called a large protection, and yet which would be the constant source of irritation—to defend such a duty from year to year, and debate after debate, would have been a position which I confess I was not anxious to occupy. I am, therefore, of opinion, that as matters now stand, the question is between keeping up the present protection, which most Gentlemen

seem to think can scarcely be maintained, and the total abolition, after the lapse of a few years, which the right hon. Baronet proposes, of all the duties on corn. Do I say that it is the way in which I should at first have wished to have made the change? No; I agree with Adam Smith and Ricardo, and others, that such changes should be gradual, and so conducted as to inflict as little injury as possible on existing interests; but, as matters now stand, and as the question is now put before the country, believing that repeal of the Corn Laws is a right object, and that in itself it is the best system, I see no course between keeping up the system of protection as it exists, or to come to a total repeal almost immediately. Sir, I may as well tell the hon. Gentleman who spoke last that at the same time he made an assertion he made an admission also. He admitted that the Corn Laws tend to enhance the price of corn, but he asserted at the same time the power of the community to purchase was increased also. But, Sir, while that which the hon. Gentleman admitted is capable of proof—and his admission strengthens that proof—he gave at the same time no proof of the other part of his proposition—that the power to purchase was also increased by this law. The hon. Gentleman said, indeed, that the prices of corn would be ruinously low; that new markets would be opened, immense supplies of corn introduced, and the English labourer displaced. But let us observe in the first instance that his argument destroys entirely what has been the main strength of the case for protection—that we ought to be independent of foreign nations for our supply of food. I could understand, if all our supplies of corn came from one or two countries, and they our rivals, that in time of war this country might run a danger of scarcity from the supplies being intercepted. I have, however, gone over in my mind the case of Russia, Prussia, and America; and I find that during the last century, as regards the two former, and since 1783 as to the latter, it has been a very few years indeed during which we have been at war with either; and that there was no period at which we were at war with all. I was comforted by this reflection, because it showed that we need not regard with apprehension our dependence on foreigners. But the hon. Member went further, and said we could receive a supply of corn from Hungary, Spain, and Egypt; in fact, that there was no place on the globe which

would not send us supplies of corn. Then what becomes of his argument as to the fear of war? So long as we retain our maritime superiority, and are at peace with nine out of ten of the nations of the globe, we shall have the supply the hon. Gentleman has so kindly pointed out. But now as to the very low prices the hon. Gentleman told us of. He tells us of a number of places in Hungary, Sissek among the rest, from which corn would be brought at 18s. the quarter. I confess, Sir, it does appear to me that this is very like another Tamboff story. I rather think that this immense supply can scarcely be calculated upon from those places. I find that there were even very low prices after that, the averages having been from 40s. to 50s.; and I, at least, am not much alarmed at such a rivalry with this country. It is, indeed, very much a question whether the prospect of having a great quantity of cheap corn is a prospect which ought to alarm the people of this country. I have heard the hon. Gentleman the Member for Somersetshire (Mr. Miles) go on by the hour, showing how great would be the fall in the price of wheat, and at last we began quite to dread that a gentleman's butcher's bill would fall almost to nothing; and now the hon. Gentleman the Member for Shrewsbury gives us additional alarm about the baker's, and has shown that our bread will be excessively cheap indeed. Why, my opinion is, that if you admit there will be a large quantity of bread, as an hon. Gentleman said at the commencement of to-night's discussion, there will also be a great many mouths to eat it—that there will be a much greater consumption of food by having a greater plenty, and thereby consuming many of the other products of agriculture and manufacture. The hon. Gentleman gave us a very vivid picture of the prosperity of Lincolnshire and other parts of England, owing to the existence of protection; but is it not partly owing also to the flourishing state of manufactures, and the ready market for agricultural produce, which is demanded and consumed by the persons dependent on the foreign trade of this country? That protection at the same time co-exists with an increased supply of foreign corn. I do not feel, therefore, those apprehensions which the hon. Gentleman has expressed of injury to the agriculturists from a still further increase in the foreign corn trade. I think that in some years great quantities of corn will come into this country, in the expectation of

prices which will not be realized; but that there will be a permanent depression of the market, such as to cripple the agriculture of this country, is not an apprehension that I think need be felt. The hon. Gentleman has spoken of the great fluctuations in this market. I will not venture with him to compare the fluctuations which have occurred in the European and American markets; there may be causes for these fluctuations of which we are not aware. But with regard to the fluctuations in this market, they have been not only very considerable, but the prices have been exceedingly high. In January, 1838, corn was 52s. the quarter; in December, it was 78s. 4d.; and in January, 1839, it rose to 81s. 6d., falling again to 65s. in October. Is there not to be found in the fluctuations of these two years a very sufficient reason for the Government saying, "Let us have a greater admission of foreign corn; let us, if possible, have the people of this country better fed than they now are?" I said just now that I think we have got accustomed to much higher prices of corn than our ancestors had any notion of. Looking to the prices which ruled in the last century, after there was an admission of foreign corn, in 1763, when this country ceased to be an exporting country, and became a large importer of corn, I find that Mr. Burke, in a pamphlet of his, says, with no sort of compassion for agriculture, that he thought the people had no great cause to complain of the high prices of bread, because, for many years, the prices of Baltic wheat ruled from 32s. to 40s. I find, taking the experience of the thirty-four years from 1750 to 1784, that the average price of the quarter of wheat has been about 15s. That was a price not generally complained of—indeed so little complained of that when, in 1791, Mr. Pitt proposed to put on a duty of 6d. when the price was 54s., Lord Liverpool, in the House of Lords, spoke of it as an injury to the manufacturing classes. My belief is, that high prices during the war, and specific importations of corn, have altered our notions upon that subject, and have made us expect and say there ought to be much higher prices of corn than the consumer is entitled to pay. But I say the consumer involves the producer, for those who are the consumers of one article are the producers of another. Look, likewise, at the question as it regards manufactures and corn. While the price of manufactures has fallen about two-thirds, the price

of corn has risen about 20 per cent. Now, is not that a reason in some respects why we should not exclude foreign corn? Is it not a reason why, as manufactures have fallen in as great a degree as corn has risen, you should no longer keep a law which puts such obstacles in the way of its imports? The hon. Gentleman spoke of an important principle of which he was the advocate. He did not inform us what this important principle was which he would maintain; and unless it was the principle of the present Corn Laws, I know not what it was. The hon. Gentleman referred to our Colonies. I think we run no risk with regard to our Colonies. I think they have great advantages, setting apart the one which they enjoy of differential duties; the trade of our Colonies, if it is to be changed, I think ought to be changed more gradually and with more caution than that of the great people of whom we are the representatives; but I think, united with this great Empire, forming a part of it, they will not be sorry to see our restrictive system abrogated. And as for Canada, I cannot find in the accounts from that Colony any symptom of that alarm which has been spoken of. It does not appear either from the meetings of the House of the Legislative Assembly, or from the public meetings, that the people of Canada do entertain those fears, or those insuperable objections of which we have heard to the change. The hon. Gentleman ended his speech by giving an account of the mode in which the right hon. Gentleman opposite came into power, and of the manner in which he abandoned the principles he before professed. Now, upon this subject, I cannot agree in thinking that all the blame belongs exclusively to the right hon. Gentleman and his Colleagues. I think that some part of it must be shared by those who for so many years have been his followers. I think, indeed, that the right hon. Gentleman, coming forward to declare that that system of protection, of which he has long been the upholder, was unjust—having declared, some four years ago, that another Bill of which he was a great promoter in opposition, was fraught with injustice, and founded on injustice, shows a want of wisdom in his former opinions upon political matters. But when I consider what the party was which existed in 1841, I am not one of those who lament the disruption which has taken place. I will frankly confess that, in my opinion, there was one

inherent defect in that great Conservative party which came into power in 1841. Their discipline was admirable; their machinery for elections was exceedingly well organized; they had candidates for every hustings, being, I may say, "*Bene nati, bene testiti, mediocriter docti*;" and these Gentlemen had many party cries which they found of exceeding value at the elections, with little invention of their own. There was the fable of the Lichfield House compact; another fable of Mr. O'Connell governing the whole Whig party; and various other inventions which indicated a great deal of fancy on the part of those who used them, though found exceedingly useful on the hustings, and which diminished by degrees, but certainly to the very smallest amount, the majorities of the Whig Government. At the same time, there were great orators and great leaders in both Houses of Parliament: persons, too, of every grade. There was, which was a great glory, the Duke of Wellington at the top; and at the bottom, with ready though smaller services, were the runners of the Carlton. Yet there was one thing which was wanting to this great Conservative party, and that was, some public object for which to contend. Mr. Burko says that a party means "a union of men for some great object of public welfare;" but such a union did not exist among that party. The opinions of many hon. Gentlemen who have spoken in the course of this discussion against the measure of the Government were very decided, and in all cases, no doubt, very honest. I think, however, that often they were exceedingly narrow. These opinions were, that protection, that the whole system of protection to native industry, was bound up with the prosperity of this country. They had also great fears of the Roman Catholics, and demanded that the Protestant ascendancy, the Protestant supremacy, or, as Lord Stanley called it, the Protestant Constitution, should be maintained above all others. Among their leaders such were the views entertained, and I do not doubt honestly entertained; but they chose the right hon. Gentleman, now First Minister of the Crown, who had sat with Mr. Huskisson, was a great promoter of Mr. Huskisson's measures, who had acted with caution, but always advocated and promoted free trade; and the right hon. Gentleman was known, in principle, to be opposed to the system of protection. The right hon. Gentleman, too, was the person who moved the Relief

Bill for the removal of the disabilities under which the Catholics laboured; and he repeatedly declared his persuasion that that Act ought not to be repealed, and that it should be observed in the spirit as well as the letter. Those opinions as to free trade and protection, led to the measure of 1842, and had led in time to the measure of 1846. Those opinions as to the Roman Catholics led him to the Maynooth Bill, which met with such violent opposition last year. But then, I ask, what was this great Conservative party? What but a union of men to turn out a Government they disliked; but who, being in office, had no bond of union, and no principle which they held in common. When that opposition was carried on entirely against particular measures of the Whig Government—when these measures were found fault with from day to day, and no general principle was stated as the ground of opposition—when the party was going on in its course with the prospect of final triumph, how came none of those Gentlemen to ask, with Sir Christopher Hatton, “What mean these mighty preparations?” And if it was replied that they could not put the question until the play was begun, and the party in office—then I think that in fairness and candour they should have come to some understanding when in opposition as to the principles on which they meant to act when in power. As it is, I do not wonder that they have been disappointed on this and on other measures. I think the right hon. Gentleman to blame. I think he should not causelessly have reversed his opinion; but that he should have stated to his party fully those principles on which he has since acted—principles in which I can see little to blame, however much they may be blamed by hon. Gentlemen opposite. But to go on week after week, and year after year, in order to overturn a Government, risking the peace and safety of Ireland—risking the security and tranquillity of the Empire, without having some settled views as to the way in which Ireland might be tranquillized and the Empire governed—that was a fatal defect in the party; and I am not sorry that that defect should have led to its dissolution. Sir, I can admire the Cavalier of 1645, who defended the Throne against Hampden and Cromwell—Sir, I can admire the Jacobites of 1745, who came forward on behalf of the Stuarts, against that which I think was the right cause—that of the House of Hanover—I can admire the chi-

valrous spirit, the determined loyalty, the firm adherence to established opinion manifested by the men who contended for those two unfortunate causes. But when I come to this triumphant cause of 1845, I find such an absence of all chivalry, such an absence of all united principle, that I own, in my opinion, it is far better that men who differ so much should be totally disunited. The hon. Gentlemen opposite who have opposed this Bill have considered that it is injurious to the country. I think that they have done themselves credit, not only by the great talent which they have displayed—undeniable talent—but by the spirit with which they have asserted their opinions. They conceive that this Bill will tend to lower this country among the nations of the globe. I consider on the contrary that it will tend to raise this country among the nations of the globe. I think it will tend to promote peace and amity amongst them, and looking to one—one of the greatest of them all—I am happy to find that there we can see symptoms of returning feelings of amity and good will. And when I read the speeches of Mr. Webster, Mr. Calhoun, and Mr. Benton, I feel anxious to forget all the idle declamation which has been wafted from the other side of the Atlantic. I trust that Her Majesty's Government may be enabled to fix the final limits which shall divide the dominions of England from those of the United States of America, and I trust that the Convention in the Treaty which shall settle that boundary, will be but a prelude to a more intimate connexion between us and that vast commonwealth of free people. I trust, Sir, that we shall together carry on our occupations—manufacturing and agricultural—vying with each other in attempting to make our productions more and more perfect—striving in the neutral markets of the world for pre-eminence—striving, if you will, that we should clothe them, and that they should feed us, but hoping never again to see the bayonets of America and England cross on any bloody field. Sir, with the warmest expression of these wishes that such may be the first-fruits of this Bill—which I trust to see carried by a large majority in the other House of Parliament—I have only to add that the Motion for the third reading has my honest and hearty support.

SIR R. PEEL said: Sir, I believe it is now nearly three months since I first proposed, as the organ of Her Majesty's Gu-

vernment, the measure which, I trust, is about to receive to-night the sanction of the House of Commons; and, considering the lapse of time—considering the frequent discussions—considering the anxiety of the people of this country that these debates should be brought to a close, I feel that I should be offering an insult to the House—I should be offering an insult to the country, if I were to condescend to bandy personalities upon such an occasion. Sir, I foresaw that the course which I have taken from a sense of public duty would expose me to serious sacrifices. I foresaw as its inevitable result, that I must forfeit friendships which I most highly valued—that I must interrupt political relations in which I felt a sincere pride; but the smallest of all the penalties which I anticipated were the continued venomous attacks of the Member for Shrewsbury. Sir, I will only say of that hon. Gentleman, that if he, after reviewing the whole of my public life—a life extending over thirty years previously to my accession to office in 1841—if he then entertained the opinion of me which he now professes; if he thought I was guilty of these petty larcenies from Mr. Horner and others, it is a little surprising that in the spring of 1841, after his long experience of my public career, he should have been prepared to give me his confidence. It is still more surprising that he should have been ready—as I think he was—to unite his fortunes with mine in office, thus implying the strongest proof which any public man can give of confidence in the honour and integrity of a Minister of the Crown. Sir, I have explained more than once what were the circumstances under which I felt it my duty to take this course. I did feel in November last that there was just cause for apprehension of scarcity and famine in Ireland. I am stating what were the apprehensions I felt at that time, what were the motives from which I acted; and those apprehensions, though they may be denied now, were at least shared then by those hon. Gentlemen who sit below the gangway (the protectionists). The hon. Member for Somersetshire expressly declared that at the period to which I referred he was prepared to acquiesce in the suspension of the Corn Laws. An hon. Member also, a recent addition to this House, who spoke with great ability the other night, the hon. Member for Dorsetshire (Mr. Seymer) distinctly declared that he thought I should have abandoned my duty if I had not advised that, considering the

circumstances of Ireland, the restrictions on the importation of foreign corn should be temporarily removed. I may have been wrong, but my impression was, first, that my duty towards a country threatened with famine required that that which had been the ordinary remedy under all similar circumstances should be resorted to—namely, that there should be free access to the food of man from whatever quarter it might come. I was prepared to give the best proof which public men generally can give of the sincerity of their opinions, by tendering my resignation of office, and devolving upon others the duty of proposing this measure; and, Sir, I felt this—that if these laws were once suspended, and there was unlimited access to food, the produce of other countries, I, and those with whom I acted, felt the strongest conviction that it was not for the public interest—that it was not for the interest of the agricultural party, that an attempt should be made permanently to reimpose restrictions on the importation of food. I could not propose the re-establishment of the existing law with any guarantee for its permanence. As the noble Lord says, I had acted with Mr. Huskisson in 1822, 1825, and 1826, in revising the commercial system, and applying to that system the principle of free trade. In 1842, after my accession to office, I proposed a revision of the Corn Laws. Had anything taken place at the election of 1841 which precluded that revision? Was there a public assurance given to the people of this country, at the election of 1841, that the existing amount of protection to agriculture should be retained? ["Yes, yes!"] There was, was there? Then, if there was, you were as guilty as I. What was the assurance given? If it was that the amount of protection to agriculture which existed in 1840 and 1841 should be retained, opposition ought to have been made by you to the revision of that system in 1842. Why was the removal of the prohibition on the importation of foreign meat and foreign cattle assented to? That removal must have been utterly at variance with any assurance that the protection to agriculture, which existed in 1840 and 1841, should be retained. Yet that removal was voted by the House by large majorities; and after the Bill of 1842, was I not repeatedly asked this question, "Now that you have passed this Bill establishing a new Corn Law, will you give a public assurance that to that you will at all times adhere?" Did I not uniformly decline to give any such assur-

ance? I said I had no intention of proposing an alteration of that law at the time when the question was put to me; but I distinctly declared that I would not fetter for ever my discretion by giving such a pledge. These things are on record. It was quite impossible for me, consistently with my own convictions, after a suspension of import duties, to propose the re-establishment of the existing law with any security for its continuance. Well, then, the question which naturally arose was this—shall we propose some diminished protection to agriculture, or, in the state of public feeling which will exist after the suspension of restriction, shall we propose a permanent and ultimate settlement of the question? To be of any avail, it must have been diminished greatly below its present standard, and that diminution, I believe, would have met with as much opposition from the agricultural body as the attempt finally to settle the question. And now, after all these debates, I am firmly convinced that it is better for the agricultural interest to contemplate the final settlement of this question, rather than to attempt the introduction of a law giving a diminished protection. My belief is, that a diminished protection would in no respect conciliate agricultural feeling; and this I must say, nothing could be so disadvantageous as to give an ineffectual protection and yet incur all the odium of giving an adequate one. What have we been told during this discussion? With scarcely an exception, I have listened attentively to every speech that has been made on this side of the House; and, admitting the talent that has been displayed, I confess they have in no respect altered the conviction upon which I have acted. You tell me it would have been possible, with such support as I should have received, to have continued the existing law; I believe it might have been. As far as the gratification of any personal object of ambition is concerned—(*Interruption*)—I am perfectly ready to listen to any reply that may be made to my observations, and I think it is hardly fair to attempt to interrupt me by such exclamations, but it has so far succeeded. [The right hon. Baronet paused a few moments and then continued.] I am told that it would have been possible to continue this protection; but, after the suspension of it—for I now assume that the suspension would have been assented to on account of the necessities of Ireland—the difficulty of maintaining it would

have been greatly increased; because it would have been shown, after the lapse of three years, that, although it had worked tolerably well during the continuance of abundance, or at least of average harvests, yet at the moment it was exposed to the severe trial of scarcity, it then ceased to effect the object for which it was enacted, and that in addition to the state of public feeling with reference to restrictions or imports generally, would have greatly added to the difficulty of maintaining the law. There would have been public proof of its inefficiency for one of the great objects for which it was enacted. But let me say, although it has not been brought prominently under consideration, that, without any reference to the case of Ireland, the working of the law, as far as Great Britain is concerned, during the present year has not been satisfactory. You would have had to contend not merely with difficulties arising from suspension on account of the case of Ireland, but it would have been shown to you, as it now could be shown to you, that the rate of duty has been high on account of the apparent lowness in the price of corn; while that lowness of price has arisen not from abundance in quantity, but from deficient quality. It would have been shown, and conclusively, that there are greater disparities of price in most of the principal markets of this country—between corn of the highest quality and of the lowest, than have ever existed in former periods. It would have been proved that there never was a greater demand than there has been during the present year for wheat of fine quality for the purpose of mixing with wheat of inferior quality, which forms the chief article brought for sale into our domestic markets. It would have been shown you that had there been free access to wheat of higher quality than they have assumed, the whole population of this country would for the last four months have been consuming bread of a better quality. My belief, therefore, is, that in seeking the re-enactment of the existing law after its suspension, you would have had to contend with greater difficulties than you anticipate. Still I am told, "You would have had a majority." I think a majority might have been obtained. I think you could have continued this law, notwithstanding these increased difficulties, for a short time longer; but I believe that the interval of its maintenance would have been but short, and that there would have been,

during the period of its continuance, a desperate conflict between different classes of society; that your arguments in favour of it would have been weak; that you might have had no alternative at an early period, had the cycle of unfavourable harvests returned—and who can give an assurance that they would not?—that you might at an early period have had no alternative but to concede an alteration of this law under circumstances infinitely less favourable than the present to a final settlement of the question. The hon. Gentleman the Member for Dorsetshire said, “We can fight the League with their own weapons;” that is to say, finding that we cannot control by law those measures resorted to by the Anti-Corn-Law League, which I cannot defend, and which I very sincerely reprobate were ever resorted to—the establishment of voters in counties, not being naturally voters in those counties—the hon. Gentleman said, “We can make fagot votes as well as they;” and the landed interest, he said, by the greater facilities which they possess, would be able to beat the League. Well, but what a sad alternative is this! What a sad conflict to be carrying on! Even admitting that it would be necessary, and might be done from honest convictions of that necessity, could you do it without destroying the county constituencies? Surely, it is wise to consider the alternative; and, believe me, you who are anxious for the maintenance of the aristocratic system, you who desire wisely, and justly desire, to discourage the infusion of too much of the democratic principle into the Constitution of the country, although you might for a time have relied on the fagot votes you created in a moment of excitement, yet the interval would not be long before that weapon would break short in your hands! You would find that those additional votes created for the purpose of combating the votes of the League, though when brought up at the first election, under the influence of an excitement connected with the Corn Laws, they might have been true to your side, yet, after the lapse of a short time, some exciting question connected with democratic feelings would arise, and then your votes and the votes of the League, not being subjected to legitimate influence, would unite, and you would find you had entailed on the country permanent evils; destroying the Constitution for the purpose of providing a temporary remedy. It was the foresight of these consequences—it

was the belief that you were about to enter into a bitter and, ultimately, an unsuccessful struggle, that has induced me to think that for the benefit of all classes, for the benefit of the agricultural class itself, it was desirable to come to a permanent and equitable settlement of this question. These are the motives on which I acted. I know the penalty to which I must be subject for having so acted; but I declare, even after the continuance of these debates, that I am only the more impressed with the conviction that the policy we advise is correct. An hon. Gentleman in the course of this evening, the hon. Member for Sunderland (Mr. Hudson), informed us that he had heard that there was excitement about the Corn Laws; but he undertook to give a peremptory contradiction to that report, for he never recollected any public question being proposed involving such great interests, which, on the whole, was received by all classes concerned—by the manufacturing and by the agricultural classes—with less excitement and with a greater disposition to confide in the wisdom of the decision of Parliament. Well, if that be so—if this question is proposed at such a time—[Mr. HUDSON: No, no!] I certainly understood the hon. Member to make that statement. [Mr. HUDSON: I will explain after.] I may be mistaken, and of course I am, if the hon. Member says so; but I understood him to say, that so far from there being any undue excitement, he thought that there was much less than could have been expected, and that all parties were disposed to acquiesce in the decision of Parliament.

MR. HUDSON: What I stated I believe was this: that there was no excitement in favour of the Bill—not that there was a deep feeling on the part of the agriculturists against it, but that there was no public excitement in its favour.

SIR R. PEEL: That varies very little from the expressions I used, and entirely justifies the inference which I drew. If there be no excitement in favour of the Bill, and no strong feeling on the part of the agriculturists against it, it appears to me that this is not an unfavourable moment for the dispassionate consideration by Parliament of a subject otherwise calculated to promote excitement on the part of one class, and to cause great apprehension on the part of the other; and the hon. Member's statement is a strong confirmation of my belief that it is wise to undertake the

settlement of this question when there is such absence of excitement, rather than to wait until a period when unfavourable harvests and depressed manufactures may have brought about a state of things which may render it less easy for you to exercise a dispassionate judgment on the matter. Sir, I do not rest my support of this Bill merely upon the temporary ground of scarcity in Ireland. I do not rest my support of the Bill upon that temporary scarcity; but I believe that scarcity left no alternative to us but to undertake the consideration of this question; and that consideration being necessary, I think that a permanent adjustment of the question is not only imperative, but the best policy for all concerned. And I repeat now that I have a firm belief that it is for the general benefit of all—for the best interests of the country, independent of the obligation imposed on us by temporary scarcity, it is for the general interests of the great body of the people that an arrangement should be made for a permanent removal of the restrictions upon the introduction of food. I will assign my reasons for that opinion. I take my facts from the opponents of this measure. I take the speech of the hon. Gentleman the Member for Oxfordshire—a speech distinguished by all the ability and usual earnestness and research of the hon. Gentleman. We shall have no difference respecting our facts, for I shall take them from the opponents of the measure. The only question is as to the just inference to be drawn from these facts. The hon. Gentleman said—"Allowing that the facts and figures which we have produced for the last thirty years are correct, then I find that there has been a great increase in trade—that there has been a cheapening of commodities; but there has been no improvement in the social condition of the great masses of the people." Now, all of you admit that the real question at issue is the improvement of the social and moral condition of the masses of the population; we wish to elevate in the gradation of society that great class which gains its support by manual labour—that is agreed on all hands. The mere interest of the landlords—the mere interest of the occupying tenants, important as they are, are subordinate to the great question—what is calculated to increase the comforts, to improve the condition, and elevate the social character of the millions who subsist by manual labour, whether they are engaged in manufactures or

in agriculture? What, then, says the hon. Member for Oxfordshire? Take his statements to be correct; and they suggest matter for grave consideration. Here is a country in which wealth has increased—in which trade has increased—in which commodities have been cheapened; but, said the hon. Gentleman, "the social condition of the people has not been raised; I have tried it by every test by which I can determine the fact, and the conclusion I come to is that it has not." If that be so, is it not a formidable state of things? If increased wealth and enjoyment—if increased trade and cheaper commodities have not given the people more contentment, have not elevated them in the moral scale—if the moral and social improvement of those who form the foundation and platform of society has not advanced, is that not a subject of serious reflection? He says, "I look to the state of crime—it has increased; I look to the great articles, not of consumption, but of luxury, which have become necessities; I look to sugar, to tea, and to other articles of a similar nature, and I find there has been no corresponding increase of consumption." He says—"I draw my inferences from the facts and the statistics of the last thirty years." Well, let us go back to the period at which the thirty years commence. That is the year 1815. Then began the present system of protection to agriculture. You say you have carefully considered this state of things—that you have looked at them for the last thirty years; and you find increased wealth, increased trade, but a deteriorated condition of the people. With what do you compare the condition of the people for the last thirty years? With what preceding period do you institute the comparison? Take any period of the last century. Let us exclude the war; because during the war which began in 1793, there was a great dislocation of capital, and a great derangement of social interest. Our comparison, to take a period of peace similar to that of the last thirty years, must be a period which preceded the French war. We must go to the last century. Take what period you please—take the period from 1700 down to 1791; and now let us compare what was the state of the law when the people, according to your showing, were in a more prosperous condition than during the last thirty years. Let us compare the state of the law at this period, or at any part of this period, as compared with that when

protection to agriculture began in 1815. Why, for the first sixty-six years of the last century there was no impediment to the importation of corn. For the first sixty-six years of that century this country was an exporting country. Let me ask you what were the agriculturists of Croatia and Hungary at that time about? Why did they not send us corn? This country was exporting corn at that time—the price of corn was low, and did not exceed 41s. What was the law passed in 1773? Why, foreign corn was admitted at a duty of 6d., when the price was above 49s. 6d.; and under that law, for six years after it was passed, this country was an exporting country. And did agriculture suffer during that period? Why, Sir, there were more Enclosure Bills passed during that period, when there was a free importation of foreign corn—when it might be brought in at a duty of 6d. if the price exceeded 49s. than ever before. There were not less than 1,560 Enclosure Bills passed. You say, then, that the condition of the people was comparatively better in point of morality and comfort than since 1815. In 1815, the commencement of the period of thirty years, this law was passed—that foreign corn should not be imported into England until after the price had arrived at 80s. There was a positive prohibition of foreign corn unless the price arrived at 80s. That was the perfection of protection. Was that to continue? You relaxed it. In 1822, you permitted the importation of foreign corn when the price exceeded 70s. You altered this law again, which the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Colquhoun) ranks with principles and ancient institutions. By the law of 1828, you subjected foreign corn when the price was under 64s. to a duty of 23s. 8d.; when it was at 69s. you subjected it to a duty of 16s. 8d.; and that law remained in force till 1842; and it was under the influence of this law, until you altered it in 1842, that you have the admission of the hon. Gentleman the Member for Oxfordshire, that the social and moral condition of the people has not improved. What, also, did we in 1815? We imposed enormous duties and positive prohibitions upon other articles the produce of foreign countries. At that time the duty upon foreign butter and cheese was 2s. 6d. and 1s. 6d. respectively; we raised it to 1l. and 10s. 6d. Therefore, we did in 1815 adopt the principle of strict protection to agriculture; and the hon. Gen-

tleman says that he finds crime increased, and the command over comforts and the moderate luxuries which partake of the nature of necessaries lessened. He says that is the result of the inspection of thirty years. So much, then, for the condition of the great body of the people. Now I come to the facts of the hon. Member for the North Riding of Yorkshire. I heard his speech; I was sorry to observe the indisposition under which he laboured—an indisposition which in no degree prevented the exercise of his intellectual faculties, or prevented him from speaking with his usual clearness and power. I ask you to take the facts of the hon. Gentleman since 1815. I am quoting the very expressions he used; the account I am giving of agriculture since that period is not mine, but his. I followed him closely, and took down his account of the condition of agriculture under a state of almost perfect protection. In 1815 you had prohibition of foreign importation till corn exceeded 80s.; and these are the historical annals of the hon. Gentleman, the advocate of agricultural protection. In 1816 and 1817, he says, you had severe distress. [Mr. CAYLEY: In 1815 and 1816.] I think it was after 1815 and 1816—I think it was in 1817, that a Speech was made from the Throne lamenting the state of society, and the efforts that were made by designing men to take advantage of the distress of the country. It was in 1817 that the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, and the Seditious Meetings Bill was passed. In 1819, the hon. Gentleman said, such was the severity of distress the Six Acts passed into a law. In 1822, he said, agricultural distress was so intense that a Committee was appointed for the purpose of devising a remedy. He said that at that time the price of wheat—of beautiful wheat—was 40s.; that a farmer stated, I think, that where there were 150 persons usually out of employ, there were then 300; and that he had the greatest difficulty, on account of the low price of wheat, in giving employment to the agricultural labourers. From 1822 the hon. Gentleman advanced to 1830, and he said that in 1830, on account of the depressed state of agriculture, we had the “Swing” fires. In 1833 agriculture was again so depressed that it was necessary to appoint a Committee to consider that distress, and to attempt to devise a remedy. He said that there were thirty-five villages in the north of England with a population of 200,000 persons depending upon their

labour, and their wages did not exceed 3s. 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per week per man. In 1834, he said, the Preston operatives presented a petition to this House, in which they complained of poverty, of ignorance, and of vice. The year 1835, he said, was as bad as the year 1822, and prices were so low that the ordinary employment of agriculture could not be afforded. 1836 and 1837, he said, were years of sudden prosperity; but that came to an end in 1838, and there was prostration and suffering from 1839 to 1842. That is the account which the hon. Member gives of the state of agriculture under that protection which was terminated by the Bill of 1842. Now, observe what the hon. Member also said; he said that there was a constant alternation of high prices and of low prices; and he said, differing from many who concur with him in their vote, that the low prices, though caused by favourable harvests, entailed the greatest suffering upon the agricultural classes, and that in 1822 and 1835, the farmer who had sold his wheat for less than 40s. complained, on account of the lowness of prices, that he could not give the usual employment. That lowness of price did not arise from competition with foreign corn; there was no foreign corn imported to reduce prices; that low price was caused by competition amongst the home growers of corn. There was a glut of productive harvests, there was no outlet for it, and there was prostration and suffering of the agriculturists in consequence. That is the account which the hon. Member gives of the result of high protection, not upon the manufacturing interest, but upon the agricultural; and when he had given that account—when he had detailed those sufferings on the part of the agriculturists, I was surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman conclude with a quotation—

“Woodman, spare that tree.”

I beg pardon, I am afraid I should have to ask the hon. Member to supply me with the verse, but the purport of it was that not a bough must be touched; that those whom it sheltered in youth ought to let it remain in their old age: after that account of the consequences of this high protection upon the agricultural interest, I was surprised to hear that advice which the hon. Gentleman gave us, not to touch a bough of that tree, under the shade of which agriculture had so long flourished. If he had said—

“Ille et nefasto te posuit die,
 • • •
 • • • agro qui statuit meo
 Te, triste lignum, te caducum
 In domini caput immerentis”—

I think it would have been a more appropriate quotation. But now, is there no exception to be made from this period of thirty years? Did nothing occur at the latter part of that period of thirty years to exempt it from the stigma which the hon. Gentleman cast upon the preceding part? There have been three years—1843, 1844, and 1845—during which you have had, from some cause or other, the benefits of plenty and of cheapness. During the last three of these thirty years the average price of wheat a little exceeded 50s.; and let us see whether during that period that censure will apply which applies to the former period—let us see whether, during the last three years, there has been no increase of comfort, no improvement in morality, no abatement of seditious feeling or disaffection. I care not what may be the cause of the abundance which has prevailed during the last three years; you say the cause is not to be attributed to the Tariff, but that good harvests have produced abundance. Be it so. But there has been comparative abundance. There has been a less outlay required for the purchase of articles of first necessity. You say there has been a demand for labour on railways. Why, that is an effect, and not a cause. It is on account of your prosperity that you are enabled to apply your capital to internal improvements, causing this demand for labour and giving increased wages; and do you believe if wheat had been at 70s. instead of 50s., there would have been the same stimulus to the application of capital? But grant that the Tariff of 1842 had nothing to do with the abatement of price in 1843, 1844, and 1845. I will concede it to you that it is attributable to the favour of Providence—to good harvests. But let us see what has been the result of this abundance. I will take the tests of the hon. Gentleman. He says, facts and figures show that there has been no increase of consumption. Now, I will show that during the last three years trade has flourished, capital has accumulated; but that you cannot say of the last three years what you can say of the preceding twenty-seven years—that there has been a deterioration in the social condition of the people. I will first take those articles which enter

largely into consumption. I have here a statement of the quantities of certain articles entered for home consumption in the United Kingdom from 1839 to 1841, and from 1843 to 1846, showing the average quantity of each article in each of those periods. In the first three years, when the prices of provisions were high, the average consumption of sugar—for the three years ending in 1841—was 3,826,000 cwt. The average consumption for the last three years ending the 1st of January, 1846, had increased from 3,826,000 cwt. to 4,346,000 cwt. The average consumption of tea in the first three years was 34,685,000 lbs. In the last three years it increased to 42,000,000 lbs. The average consumption of coffee during the first three years of high price was 27,941,000 lbs. annually; the average consumption of the last three years was 31,883,000 lbs. The consumption of cocoa in the first three years averaged 1,859,000 lbs. annually; in the last three years 2,575,000 lbs. Take another article, which, though in a smaller degree, enters largely into the consumption of the poor, and which is not a bad test of their comfort. During the first three years the consumption of currants averaged 175,000 cwt.; in the last three years it had increased to 280,000 cwt. I take then the tests of the hon. Member for Oxfordshire—the consumption of articles necessary to the comfort of the people; and I show him that comparative plenty has produced this change in the command of the working classes over the smaller luxuries of life. I will next come to a more important point—the state of crime. You have now an official record, presented within a few days, of what has been the state of crime in this country during the last thirty years. Now, what was the state of crime during the first period of twenty-seven years? From the first record in 1805, down to 1842, when the commitments attained the maximum number hitherto recorded, the increase in crime progressed from year to year, until it had extended to above 600 per cent. In 1843 a change commenced. In that year the number of commitments decreased. Within the last six years, three years of great increase of crime have been followed by three years during which the decrease was so considerable, that the number of commitments in 1845 has been reduced to what it was seven years ago. In the three years of high prices, this was the state of crime in each year:—The number of commit-

ments in the first year was 27,187; in the second, 27,760; and in the third, 31,309. During the last three years the number of commitments has been—in the first year, 29,591; in the second, 26,542; and in the third, 24,303. Well, then, I take this other test of criminality and the extension of morality; and I ask whether we can resist the legitimate inference that the comparative cheapness and plenty which have existed during the last three years have had their effect in producing this diminished criminality? The Gentleman who drew up this return says—

“The decrease of commitments in England,” for the last three years, “has therefore been general, continued, and extensive, to a degree of which there is no recorded example in this kingdom.”

He says again—

“In the sixth class, containing those offences which do not fall within the definitions of the foregoing classes”—violence to the person, and offences against property—“there is a total absence of commitments for seditious riots or sedition.”

A total absence of commitments for these offences! Why, can you have a stronger proof of the improvement of a country, apart from the command of comforts, than the fact that there should have been this progressive diminution in commitments, and a total absence of any commitments for sedition or seditious riots? I say, therefore, comparing the result of the three years when we have had diminished protection to agriculture and a reduced price of provisions, with the twenty-seven preceding years, the inference is just, that the diminution of crime is attributable to an increased command over those articles which constitute the food of the people. But you say, “As this happy state of things has arisen during the existence of the present Corn Laws—as the present Corn Laws have been co-existent with cheapness and plenty, on what principle do you seek to disturb this happy arrangement? You have proved that, co-existent with the Corn Laws, there have been cheapness and happiness; why, then, do you now come forward to propose their alteration?” Why, if you can show me that those laws were the cause of this happiness and plenty, that would no doubt be a strong and powerful reason for their continuance. But it cannot be denied that, simultaneously with a reduced protection to agriculture, there has been not only no diminution in agricultural improvement, but increased exertions, an increased demand for agricultural products, and increased comfort for the people. As you have pro-

ceeded downwards from 1815 to 1842, there has been a corresponding benefit from the abatement of protection. If we could anticipate that the law of 1842 would continue to produce all the advantages to which I have referred, that might be a conclusive reason for adhering to it. But you assert that favourable harvests have occasioned these advantages. Why, what guarantee have you for the continuance of favourable harvests? You have had comparatively favourable harvests for the last three years; and you say then, as a matter of necessity, that we ought to continue this law. Continue the law, say I too, if you can prove that this particular law has been the cause of these benefits. If, however, you say that favourable harvests have been the cause, I say then, that that does not constitute any reason for continuing the law. Those who have observed attentively the vicissitudes of the seasons, have remarked that there are cycles of favourable and unfavourable years. There was an unfavourable cycle of years in 1839, 1840, and 1841, during which time there was great distress. There has been since a favourable cycle of years, during which there has been comparative abundance. But supposing that this cycle of years in which we have had unfavourable harvests should again return, have we, I ask, any security that the law of 1842 will enable us to obtain an ample supply of food? Suppose, also, that, co-existent with those unfavourable harvests, we had also a depressed state of manufactures—shall we then be in a favourable position for making any alteration in the law? Remember how short a time has elapsed since we had the state of Paisley, of Sheffield, and of Stockport, brought under our special notice. Now, if these times should again return, after this interval of comparative happiness, when the contrast of our misery will be considerably heightened by the preceding period of happiness which has prevailed, do you believe it would be possible to maintain in existence a law which leaves a duty of 16s. a quarter upon wheat when it had arrived at the price of 56s.? You may say, "Disregard the progress of public opinion; defy the League; enter into a combination against it; determine to fight the battle of protection, and you will succeed." My firm belief is—without yielding to the dictation of the League or any other body—["Oh, oh!"]—yes, subjecting myself to that imputation, I will not hesitate to say my firm belief is, that it is most consistent

with prudence and good policy, most consistent with the real interests of the landed proprietors themselves, most consistent with the maintenance of a territorial aristocracy, seeing by how precarious a tenure, namely, the vicissitudes of seasons, you hold your present protection system—I say, it is my firm belief that it is for the advantage of all classes, in these times of comparative comfort and comparative calm, to anticipate the angry discussions which might arise, by proposing at once a final adjustment of this question. I have stated the reasons which have induced me to take the present course. You may no doubt say, that I am only going on the experience of three years, and am acting contrary to the principles of my whole life. Well, I admit that charge—I admit that I have defended the existence of the Corn Laws—yes, and that, up to the present period, I have refused to acquiesce in the proposition to destroy them. I candidly admit all this; but when I am told that I am acting inconsistently with the principles of my whole life, by advocating free trade, I give this statement a peremptory denial. During the last three years, I have subjected myself to many taunts on this question, and you have often said to me that Earl Grey had found out something indicating a change in my opinions. Did I not say I thought that we ought not hastily to disturb vested interests by any rash legislation? Did I not declare that the principle of political economy suggested the purchasing in the cheapest market, and the selling in the dearest market? Did I not say, I thought that there was nothing so special in the produce of agriculture that should exempt it from the application of this principle which we have applied already to other articles? You have a right, I admit, to taunt me with any change of opinion upon the Corn Laws; but when you say, that by my adoption of the principles of free trade I have acted in contradiction to those principles which I have always avowed during my whole life, that charge, at least, I say, is destitute of foundation. Sir, I will not enter at this late hour into the discussion of any other topic. Sir, I foresaw the consequences that have resulted from the measures which I thought it my duty to propose. We were charged with the heavy responsibility of taking security against a great calamity in Ireland. We did not act lightly. We did not form our opinion upon merely local information—the information of local authorities likely

to be influenced by an undue alarm. Before I and those who agreed with me came to that conclusion, we had adopted every means—by local inquiry, and by sending perfectly disinterested persons of authority to Ireland—to form a just and correct opinion. Whether we were mistaken or not—I believe we were not mistaken—but, even if we were mistaken, a generous construction should be put upon the motives and conduct of those who are charged with the responsibility of protecting millions of the subjects of the Queen from the consequences of scarcity and famine. Sir, whatever may be the result of these discussions, I feel severely the loss of the confidence of those from almost all of whom I heretofore received a most generous support. So far from expecting them, as some have said, to adopt my opinions, I perfectly recognise the sincerity with which they adhere to their own. I recognise their perfect right, on account of the admitted failure of my speculation, to withdraw from me their confidence. I honour their motives, but I claim, and I always will claim, while intrusted with such powers and subject to such responsibility as the Minister of this great country is intrusted with, and is subject to—I always will assert the right to give that advice which I conscientiously believe to be conducive to the general well-being. I was not considering, according to the language of the hon. Member for Shrewsbury, what was the best bargain to make for a party. I was considering first what were the best measures to avert a great calamity, and, as a secondary consideration, to relieve that interest which I was bound to protect from the odium of refusing to acquiesce in measures which I thought to be necessary for the purpose of averting that calamity. Sir, I cannot charge myself or my Colleagues with having been unfaithful to the trust committed to us. I do not believe that the great institutions of this country have suffered during our administration of power. The noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) says he hopes that the discussions which have threatened the maintenance of amicable relations with the United States will be brought to a fortunate close. Sir, I think I can appeal to the course which we have pursued, against some obloquy, some misconstruction, some insinuations, that we were abandoning the honour of this country—I think I can appeal to the past experience of this Government, that it has been our earnest desire, by every effort consistently with the na-

tional honour, to maintain friendly relations with every country on the face of the globe. This principle, so long as we are entrusted with the management of public affairs, will continue to influence us in respect to the settlement of our unfortunate differences with the United States. Sir, if I look to the prerogative of the Crown—if I look to the position of the Church—if I look to the influence of the aristocracy—I cannot charge myself with having taken any course inconsistent with Conservative principles, calculated to endanger the privileges of any branch of the Legislature, or of any institutions of the country. My earnest wish has been, during my tenure of power, to impress the people of this country with a belief that the Legislature was animated by a sincere desire to frame its legislation upon the principles of equity and justice. I have a strong belief that the greatest object which we or any other Government can contemplate should be to elevate the social condition of that class of the people with whom we are brought into no direct relationship by the exercise of the elective franchise. I wish to convince them that our object has been so to apportion taxation, that we shall relieve industry and labour from any undue burden, and transfer it, so far as is consistent with the public good, to those who are better enabled to bear it. I look to the present peace of this country; I look to the absence of all disturbance—to the non-existence of any commitment for a seditious offence; I look to the calm that prevails in the public mind; I look to the absence of all disaffection; I look to the increased and growing public confidence on account of the course you have taken in relieving trade from restrictions, and industry from unjust burdens; and where there was dissatisfaction I see contentment; where there was turbulence I see there is peace; where there was disloyalty I see there is loyalty; I see a disposition to confide in you, and not to agitate questions that are at the foundations of your institutions. Deprive me of power to-morrow, you can never deprive me of the consciousness that I have exercised the powers committed to me from no corrupt or interested motives—from no desire to gratify ambition, or attain any personal object; that I have laboured to maintain peace abroad consistently with the national honour, and defending every public right—to increase the confidence of the great body of the people in the justice of your decisions, and by the means of equal law to dispense

with all coercive powers—to maintain loyalty to the Throne, and attachment to the Constitution, from a conviction of the benefit that will accrue to the great body of the people.

MR. DISRAELI: Mr. Speaker, the right hon. Gentleman having made an insinuation against me, which the cheer of his supporters opposite showed to me had conveyed a very erroneous impression, I think the House will feel that under these circumstances it is not presumptuous in me to ask a moment's attention to a subject so peculiarly personal as the insinuation of the right hon. Gentleman. I understand the insinuation of the right hon. Gentleman, if it meant anything, to be this—that my opposition, or, as he called it, my envenomed opposition to him, was occasioned by my being disappointed of office. Now, having been for five years in opposition to the late Government, an active, though I well know not an influential, supporter of the right hon. Gentleman, and having been favoured by him with an acknowledgment of his sense of my slight services, I do not think there would have been anything dishonourable for me if, when the new Government was formed in 1841, I had been an applicant for office. It might have been in good taste or not, but at least there would have been nothing dishonourable; but I can assure the House nothing of the kind ever occurred. I never shall—it is totally foreign to my nature—make an application for any place. But in 1841, when the Government was formed—I am sorry to touch upon such a matter, but insinuations have been made by paragraphs in the newspapers, and now by charges in this House—I have never adverted to the subject, but when these charges are made, I must—in 1841, when the Government was formed, an individual possessing, as I believe him to possess, the most intimate and complete confidence of the right hon. Gentleman, called on me and communicated with me. There was certainly some conversation—I have certainly never adverted to these circumstances, and should not now unless compelled, because they were under a seal of secrecy confided to me. There was some communication, not at all of that nature which the House perhaps supposes between the right hon. Gentleman and me, but of the most amicable kind. I can only say this—it was a transaction not originated by me, but which any Gentleman, I care not how high his honour or spirit, might entertain to-morrow. I need not go into my con-

duct consequent on that occasion. If I took my course in this House, according to the malevolent insinuations made, I do not mean by the right hon. Gentleman, but by others, and now they are sacred at by him. ["Oh, oh!"] Some person says, "Oh, oh." If I thought the majority of the House believed that I was under the influence of motives of this character when I rose, I certainly should never rise again in this House. ["Question!"] This is the question—it is a fair personal explanation. I say a communication was made to me—not authorized by the right hon. Gentleman—he is not fond of authorizing people—but a communication was made to me—though no doubt there may have been mistakes and misconceptions. But with reference to the course I afterwards followed, I declare I never took a decided step until my constituents, in consequence of the pledges I had given in 1843, called upon me for a definite explanation of my opinions on the question of protection. This was two years after the circumstance of which I have spoken took place. I then gave a silent vote against the policy of the right hon. Gentleman. The year after that I opposed him, but no one could call it an envenomed opposition. The instant I did that these rumours were circulated. The right hon. Gentleman, I dare say, alluded in a moment of inadvertence or great irritation to this subject. ["Oh, oh!"] To me it is perfectly immaterial, whatever he may have intended. There is a line between public and private communications. It was not till I took that line that these rumours were circulated. A Gentleman, a Member of this House, who has allowed me to mention his name, told me that a Member of the Government—I believe a Member of the Government—told him that a Cabinet Minister had a letter in his pocket from me, asking for the Ministry at Madrid, and that it would be read aloud the next time I attacked the Government. These rumours were always circulated—they were put forward directly or indirectly—but I can say that I never asked a favour of the Government, not even one of those mechanical things which persons are obliged to ask; yet these assertions were always made in that way, though I never asked a favour; and, as regards myself, I never, directly or indirectly, solicited office. Anything more unfounded than the rumour circulated to-night, that my opposition to the right hon. Gentleman has ever been influenced by such considerations, there

cannot be. [*Interruption.*] If my explanation be not satisfactory, it is only because I am prevented from making it. But I have only one observation to make. It is very possible if, in 1841, I had been offered office, I dare say it would have been a very slight office, but I dare say I should have accepted it. I have not that high opinion of myself as to suppose that the more important offices of the Government would have been offered to my acceptance; but I can only say I am very glad I did not accept it. But with respect to my being a solicitor of office, it is entirely unfounded. Whatever occurred in 1841 between the right hon. Gentleman and myself was entirely attributable to the intervention of another Gentleman whom I supposed to be in the confidence of the right hon. Baronet, and I dare say it may have arisen from a misconception. But I do most unequivocally, and upon my honour, declare that I never have for a moment been influenced by such considerations in the House.

SIR R. PEEL: The hon. Gentleman has not correctly stated that which I said. I did not say that he was influenced in his opposition by personal motives. The words I said were these: "If he, reviewing my political life previously to 1841, which was of the duration of thirty years, really believed that I deserved the character he gave of me to-night, that then it was not right that in 1841 he should accept me as a leader, and not only accept me as a leader, but that he should have intimated to me that he was not unwilling to give that proof of confidence that would have been implied by the acceptance of office."

LORD G. BENTINCK: Sir, the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government has appealed to the cheapness of food for the last three or four years, and to the measures that have been adopted for removing restriction upon articles chiefly entering into the consumption of the people as the cause for that cheapness. I admit that the greater command of the necessaries of life, which I am glad to hear the people of this country have enjoyed during the last few years, has contributed much, perhaps more than anything, to their happiness, contentment, and morality. But, Sir, I maintain that this improvement in the condition of the people has not arisen from any great importation of foreign corn—for that cheapness and that plenty we are indebted in the first place to the bounty and blessing of that

Great Being whom it is not the fashion of Her Majesty's Ministers to mention, unless it is to couple the name of Providence with the calamity that has lately visited Ireland. I appeal, Sir, to Her Majesty's Speech from the Throne as a proof that I have not exaggerated the statement of the Ministers. Sir, since 1842, there have been imported into this country, in the course of the last four years, 4,900,000 quarters of corn—a quantity not upon an average exceeding that imported in previous years. But in the years 1844 and 1845 there were no such great importations of foreign corn; and it is to the abundant nature of the harvest, to the great plenty of home-grown corn, and because we were under no necessity to send some 10,000,000*l.* to foreign countries to buy the corn the produce of these countries—it is to these causes, and to the consequent abundance of money in this country, that we are to ascribe in a great measure the speculation in railways, and the increased employment to various classes in this country. I appeal to every man who knows anything of the commercial state of this country to say, whether it was not to railways, to the employment of the people, and the increased rate of wages, that the great prosperity of the last few years is to be ascribed? Sir, the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department has said, that this is not an exclusively agricultural country; I presume, Sir, it is as much an agricultural country now as on the 10th of June last year. When answering the speech of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton (Mr. Villiers), the right hon. Baronet said, there were not more than one-third of the people engaged in agricultural pursuits. The right hon. Baronet made this statement upon the occasion I have referred to; but, perhaps he will permit me to remind him that he left out of his calculation the whole of the population of Ireland—eight millions of the Irish people, who, he has said, depend altogether upon agricultural pursuits, and are engaged in no other produce than that of food, and who have no other means of subsistence than that derived from raising corn and food. Sir, an attempt has been made now to state, that we have become not an agricultural, but altogether a manufacturing country. No doubt a large portion of the people are engaged in manufactures; but those who derive a subsistence from agricultural pursuits are far greater in number. The largest number that has

ever been described as being engaged in manufactures does not exceed 100,000, and 200,000 in mines and employed in the manufacture of metals. Now, what is the number of those said to be engaged in agriculture? Why, Sir, exclusive of the eight millions which, the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department says, depend for subsistence upon agriculture in Ireland, there are 800,000 labourers engaged in agriculture. We are told that in advocating this measure we are actuated by selfish motives. Why, Sir, have those who made that imputation for a moment considered how many persons are engaged, in addition to the labourers, in the cultivation of the soil? Hon. Gentlemen opposite would fain have it supposed that the Members of the House of Commons, and perhaps those of the House of Peers, are the only persons whose interests are involved in the maintenance of protection to agriculture. Now, Sir, I should be glad to know how many other persons are interested in protection to British agriculture. Upon reference to returns made in the year 1812, I find of the occupiers of land paying a rent under 66*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* each, there were no fewer than 114,000 persons. There were of those assessed under 200*l.*, 400,000 more, and altogether, 578,000 persons assessed under 200*l.* per annum. Why, Sir, are not the hon. Gentlemen who charge the Members of this and the other House with being the only persons interested in maintaining protection to agriculture, aware, that the landed aristocracy cannot fall without those 578,000 persons and their families, and the 3,000,000 of persons, exclusive of agricultural labourers, falling with them? And what are the numbers of those of greater fortune? There were, in the year 1812, 42,000 persons dependent upon agriculture who were assessed at sums exceeding 2000*l.* per annum. Is it not, then, absurd for hon. Gentlemen to say that we are only looking to our own interests? Sir, we are advocating the cause of the largest class in this country; but while we are advocating the cause of the great and important agricultural interests, we are not attempting to introduce any measures hostile to the cause of manufactures. I am aware that manufacturers, by purchasing foreign corn, may induce the countries producing that corn to take extensively in return their manufactured articles; but when we look to the corn-growing countries on the one hand, and to our com-

mercial relations on the other, there is no foundation for cherishing a hope of a great increase of trade with them. Look at Russia. You already take from Russia five millions of her produce, while she only takes two millions from you in return. Already, therefore, if it be a question of ability to purchase, Russia would have no difficulty on that head. [*Cries of "Adjourn!"*] I understood it was the general wish of the House that the debate should be concluded to-night. I am always sorry to trespass upon the attention of the House; but I assure you that in claiming this kind indulgence now, I am only actuated by that which I consider to be a binding obligation. I have alluded also to Prussia. Prussia takes two millions sterling a year produce; while you take from her between two and three millions. If you import great quantities of corn from Prussia, the right hon. Gentleman has told you that it cannot be done without great displacement of the labour of our own people; and what hope have you that either Russia or Prussia will take your manufactures in return? What is the case, again, with the United States of America? From the United States, your imports, at the lowest computation, amount to something like 10,000,000*l.* a year; but they only take from you, in return, about 7,000,000*l.* thus sending 3,000,000*l.* more than she takes. And where is the hope that, for every pound's worth of corn you take from America, she will take a pound's worth of your cotton in return? But what is the state of the foreign trade? The entire amount of your foreign exports does not exceed in value one-third of the whole manufactures of this country. But the whole consumption of foreign goods is at least double that of your entire exports to foreign countries—and more than one-half of that is exported to countries that do not yield any corn in exchange. The entire consumption of manufactures of all kinds in this country, in your home market, does not fall short of 195,000,000*l.* sterling per annum; and if such be the case, surely it is clear that your home market, exclusive of your Colonies, ought to be of more consideration than your foreign market. But there are other circumstances and other interests also to be taken into account. There is, for instance, the shipping interest. You have engaged, in the coasting corn trade alone, no fewer than from 40,000 to 50,000 seamen annually, whilst your foreign trade only employs a small propor-

tion of your carrying trade. Last year there were only 5,000 seamen engaged in the foreign corn carrying trade, whilst the seamen of foreign nations engaged in it amounted to 9,000. But are the seamen alone concerned? I would ask the publicans, victuallers, and shopkeepers of our seaport towns, whether the arrival of a foreign ship, carrying corn, or of a British vessel, in their harbours, caused the larger expenditure of money among them in the purchase of such articles as might be required? Depend upon it, the more this subject is considered the clearer will it appear that there will be many that will suffer by this change, in addition to the agricultural interest itself—many who are not seen in the cursory glance which we are apt to take of this question. Again, no fewer than 11,600 seamen were engaged for nine months of last year in the importation of guano; and if you thus proceed to discourage agriculture, do you think that any more guano will be purchased? The right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on a former occasion, appealed, as an evidence that there existed no alarm in respect of those measures of the Government, to the fact of the introduction of a Bill which bore my name on the back of it, for the recovery of 30,000 or 40,000 acres of land from the encroachment of the sea. But when was it that that measure originated? In 1837; and it was only at the end of the year 1844 that there was reason to believe that the work to be undertaken under that Bill would be carried into execution; and at that time I had good reason to confide in the stability and permanence of the then existing system. It is the right hon. Baronet the Home Secretary—he who took so prominent a part in displacing from power the Whig Government in 1841—he it is who said, “Thank God, we are about to be relieved from the curse of so reckless a Government!” and turned out the Whigs because they advocated a fixed duty of an amount so low as 8s. a quarter—he it is who subsequently withdrew, after having accepted office, to his constituents at Dorchester, and then put up that celebrated invocation—

“May I be cold before that dreadful day,
I pressed by a load of monumental clay!”

And am I, the proposer of the measure to which the right hon. Baronet has referred—I, who was the chairman of the company that originated this scheme—I, who had placed my confidence in the right hon.

Gentleman, and who had followed him through evil report and good report for eighteen years, until now, when I felt I could no longer do so consistently with my political honour—am I to be told now, that my having introduced the Bill to which he refers is a proof of the confidence we entertain in the present Government? I can tell the right hon. Gentleman (Sir J. Graham) this—that there was great hesitation as to whether we should proceed with the measure or not at the time; and I do not doubt, that were it not from that natural frailty of human nature which induces people so frequently to send good money after bad, we should, after having expended no less than 20,000*l.*, have abandoned the measure altogether. But these, Sir, are some of the fallacies on which Her Majesty’s Government consents to support free-trade measures. But this is not all. The noble Lord the Member for Falkirk (Lord Lincoln) has appealed to the increased amount for which property, as he states, now sells, as a proof of the confidence of the country in these free trade measures. On the hustings at Newark, when he was a candidate for South Nottinghamshire, the noble Lord told the electors of that district, and, through them, told the country, that there was a property which, having been purchased for 3,800*l.*, had been sold, on the Friday preceding the day on which he was addressing the electors, for as much as 5,500*l.* Now, this property was purchased originally by a gentleman named Taylor, who is now dead, for the sum of 3,586*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.* If it was true that this property, which originally sold, as the noble Lord says, for 3,800*l.* had been enhanced in value by these free trade measures, there would have been some reason for the reference which has been made to it. But it has been no such thing. This property was, in reality, purchased originally for 3,586*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.* I wish to be accurate, and have no desire to quote wrong figures, or produce erroneous returns—and there was another property bought and added to it, to the amount of 780*l.*; but when the whole together came again to be sold, it realized, not 5,500*l.*, but no more than 4,700*l.* The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government has asked us tonight why we did not object sooner to his policy, and said that the year 1842 was the period at which we ought to have opposed his measures. But, Sir, I do not know why we should have done so in 1842.

True it was, that in opposing the Government of the Queen in 1841 the right hon. Baronet (Sir J. Graham) thanked God that he had pinned his opponents to something out of which they could not wriggle—viz., a fixed duty of 8s.; but whilst the right hon. Baronet pledged himself to the sliding scale, as giving a higher protection than an 8s. duty, he said that we were giving an effectual protection to Ireland, in addition to this country and many other interests it contained. Now, this is a proof that, at the time to which I refer, the right hon. Baronet thought that you could not injure agriculture without, at the same time, injuring the manufacturers of this country. He referred to the time of distress at Paisley; but I thought, Sir, that it was exactly about the time of his Corn Bill of 1842 that this season of distress occurred; and, therefore, if he could pass a law at a time when Paisley was in that state, what, let me ask, could happen in Paisley worse than what did happen at the time I speak of; and what could there be to prevent him from maintaining that law, particularly when he had a majority of 90 at his back? Why, Sir, very significant signs—I do not refer to the recent elections that have taken place, but very significant signs were given in the country not very long since, that there would have been confidence in the right hon. Gentleman's Government so long as he maintained protection to agriculture. In Warwickshire an election took place, at which even the Whig candidate dared not to abstain from a profession of support of the agricultural interest—an election which ended in the return of my noble Friend (Lord Brooke), who does his constituents so much honour. There was no opposition, though it was so near to those free trade towns, Birmingham and Coventry. I think that was a pretty good proof that in Warwickshire there was no unfavourable feeling to agriculture. Then there was another election at Wigan, a manufacturing town, and that was carried by a Protectionist Member. But was there not another striking example? Was not my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland elected—and did not my hon. Friend come forward at Sunderland, on the distinct ground of protection to British industry, and protection to agricultural interest? There he fought the battle—there he met the hon. Members for Durham and Stockport. All the power of the League was brought to bear upon him, but it was brought to bear in vain. The principles of protection pre-

vailed, and so they would again if Her Majesty's Ministers would appeal to the country. But they dare not appeal to the country. There was a time when the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Ministry took a different view of the feelings of honour which ought to influence a Member of Parliament. In 1829, when he differed in opinion from his constituents in Oxford on bringing forward his Bill for Catholic Emancipation, he then felt it to be his first duty to resign the trust which they had committed to his hands. Though he had given no pledge, yet he had accepted it on an honourable understanding that he would support the principles of Protestant ascendancy. If a feeling of honour bound him then, how comes it that the same feeling of honour does not bind him now? Is it that he is aware that the constituencies of the country—the English constituencies—do not like vacillation—that they do not like tergiversation; and that it is from the hateful experience of those results in one instance, he does not think it safe to try another, either in his own person or in that of his supporters? This measure may be carried. It is not carried yet, though. But when the fatal stroke comes—it will not come, it never could come, from its real enemies—it will come, if it comes at all, from its false friends; and it will come in a manner which, in my opinion, will reflect lasting disgrace upon the House and upon the Government. We hear something of justice now from the right hon. Baronet; but he has a Colleague who sits with him in the Cabinet, though he has not a seat in this House, who took a different view of the question of justice in 1843. Mr. Secretary Gladstone said, in 1843, that the Corn Law was a compromise with the agricultural interest, and that it could not be broken without injustice—that it was held to be a final adjustment of the question; and that to dispute that adjustment would be dishonourable to Parliament. But now that right hon. Gentleman consents to sit side by side in the Cabinet with the right hon. Baronet, whose conduct he condemns as dishonourable to the Government, and dishonourable to Parliament. We are told by hon. Gentlemen—we are told by the placemen—the renegade placemen who support Her Majesty's Ministers, we are told by one and all of them, that, as if by some miracle, new convictions had crossed their minds, and that they now entertain a conscientious conviction that their old opinions were wrong. I think that the country will

look round about and consider whether there may not have been other inducements besides those of their miraculous conversions. The country will look to the party, and they will find that out of a party numbering 352 Members, there were about 40 placemen, and that of those 40 placemen there were but four honourable exceptions who remained firm and steadfast to their opinions. We have heard something about sincerity from my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. He said, Let us be sincere. Sir, I wish he were sincere. I wish that he were sincere in all those professions which he has so eloquently made on former occasions in this House. But when we talk of sincerity, no man who heard them can doubt of the sincerity of my noble Friend the Member for Stamford and my hon. Friend the Member for Wenlock, who made great sacrifices, who sacrificed place and favour, to resist the measures of the right hon. Baronet. Sir, when the country looks round and sees that of the forty placemen, only one in ten did not change their opinions, whilst of the remaining 312 Gentlemen, who had not the inducements of place, no less than 240 remained true to their opinions, they will think that there is something more than sincerity in this change of opinions on the part of hon. Members. Sir, if this measure be carried, it will not be carried as a trophy of the victory of any sound political principle; it will not be carried as the trophy of the victory of any honest policy; but it will be carried as a badge of the treachery of Her Majesty's Ministers.

Mn. VILLIERS said, that the noble Lord had commenced his speech by an assertion somewhat presumptuous—that he and his party had a higher regard for religion and honour than the rest of the House: in both respects he must dispute that title. The noble Lord insinuated that when the Government referred the recent improvement of the people to the cheapness of food, they forgot that this cheapness was to be traced to the bounty of Providence—an influence which he said the Ministers had been much disposed of late to forget. He (Mr. Villiers) considered, on the contrary, that this disregard of the bounty of Providence was directly chargeable upon the noble Lord and his party. It was the bounty of Heaven, in this country and abroad, with which Gentlemen opposite were always warring. The noble Lord says, that he is glad when cheapness comes from abundance in this country, and ad-

mits the blessing it confers on the people. But the noble Lord knows nothing of the history of his subject, or the objects of his party, if he believes that such was, or had ever been, their view of cheapness and plenty. The law was passed to prevent cheapness; and whenever it failed in its object, his party had never omitted to complain of it as an evil. Let the noble Lord ask the hon. Member for Somersetshire if he could deny this? The hon. Member for Somersetshire had, but without reference to its cause, distinctly and often complained of the fact of cheap food, though he never had attempted to deny the blessing it was to the people. It was then of the bounty of Providence that they complained; and what was it that the noble Lord had been doing himself for so many weeks past, but complain of the abundance of other countries which, by free trade, might be made accessible to the people of this country? But was abundance abroad not equally the bounty of Providence as the abundance at home? And when the Ministers had proposed a measure giving the people access to it, and the noble Lord tried to defeat that measure, were they or the noble Lord with most justice chargeable with indifference to the gifts of Providence? It was precisely to enable the people to enjoy these blessings that we had been labouring so long; and when the hon. Member for Shrewsbury said that they had abandoned all their leading positions, one of which was to make the necessities of life abundant, which he calls the cry of "cheap bread," he (Mr. Villiers) told him that there was no foundation for such a statement; and he reflected upon it with satisfaction that, during the annual discussion which for nine years past had taken place on this question, there was no fact, no argument, no opinion that he had ever stated in support of the question that was not now recognised as true, or that he had reason to retract. They had been admitted to be sound by the measure itself before the House, and the arguments by which it had been supported; but above all, by their having, during the long and dreary debates of this Session, received no answer or refutation from the Gentlemen opposite. It had been shown how the law had failed in all its pretences of advantage, and how it had verified every prediction of mischief which would follow from it. Gentlemen opposite could have no better proof of their failure than the fact that the more they had spoken, the more time they had wasted, the

more they had alienated their partisans from them; and while there was no vestige of panic or alarm at the measure out of doors, there was as little interest taken in their proceedings against it within the House. There was one circumstance elicited during the debate that had shown the hollowness of all that had been said in favour of the law, and of the little reliance to be placed on it by its friends. He meant the admission that every party in the House would have been willing, upon the apprehended deficiency of food last October, to suspend the Corn Law, and to have considered that the cure for scarcity was to abolish the protection to agriculture—the law which was to produce plenty, and to save the country from scarcity. Yes! the whole House, it seems, deemed the remedy for a deficiency of food was to abolish the Corn Law. He thought this was a most instructive circumstance, and could not be repeated too often, to show the value of protection; for, in the first place, he asked how this was to be justified to the farmers, who were promised protection against foreign competition? They were told that they could be protected consistently with the welfare of the community, and that they might rely upon its continuance. But how was it more just to them to suspend the law than to repeal it entirely? They are of course less prepared for it just after the harvest than at any other time; and if any loss was to follow from it, it would have been the farmers alone, and no one else, at that time, that would have felt it. Again, if this was the proper remedy last year, who can say it will not be equally required this year? And if the farmer must be subject in future to this suspension of the law, where was the worth of protection to him? But he asked attention to the fact that this was the remedy proposed when famine was expected. Now what was meant by famine? It only meant, in reality, that food would become comparatively scarce, and less accessible to a greater number of people than before; but for this evil every party in the House of Commons considered in last October that the remedy was to suspend the Corn Law! There was no doubt, then, that this would meet the evils of a scarcity of food, and prevent the people from starving, or resorting to coarser food; but if this is the remedy for food being too dear for a few more people than usual, why, he asked, was it not the remedy for the millions who are usually deprived of good and wholesome food on

account of its dearthness? It was apprehended from a scarcity in England, that perhaps one or two millions would find it difficult to get good food; but that is habitually the case in Ireland. Why is not the remedy then which is good in this case for England to be deemed also good for Ireland, suffering as she does habitually from the same malady? When the Government, then, sees that we have to expect periodical scarcity in this country, and as the people increase, that we have to expect we shall be obliged constantly to suspend the Corn Law, what is it but wisdom and justice to all concerned to remove altogether the barrier to a regular and plentiful supply, and dissipate the delusion under which those who depend on its continuance have ever been placed? It was for this reason that he considered the Ministerial measure an honest one, founded on all the evidence and experience which this country has had offered of its necessity, and one which promises nothing but advantage to the people. It was honestly intended; and Ministers have therefore had the advantage of being able to argue and defend it honestly, which they have done. Had it been founded on the notion that a tax or toll of ten or twenty per cent. upon the entry of an article into this country could be imposed, without raising its cost to the consumer, or had it given any sanction to the fancy that a fixed impediment to commerce would not limit the supply, because that impediment was fixed, and not fluctuating—or had it proceeded on the principle that food could be wisely taxed for revenue in this country, after the experience they had that whatever raised the price of food impairs the other sources of revenue, it would have been deemed a fraudulent and delusive measure, and would have failed to obtain the requisite support for its success. The measure has, however, wisely recognised the failure of the experiment of having a Corn Law at all in this country, and provided for its total abolition. The country was therefore under a deep obligation to the Government for the measure; and if there was anything that could enhance that obligation, it was the spirit, ability, and firmness with which it had been supported; and now he asked those hon. Gentlemen opposite to pause before they proclaimed themselves to the country, and transmitted their names to posterity, as having to the last endeavoured to withhold from the people the unquestionable right, the undoubted

privilege and great advantage, of carrying the fruits of their industry to the highest market, and of allowing them the freest access to the bounties which Providence, through the industry of other nations, had provided for them. Let them reflect before they vote, that the law of which they are so tenacious has been discredited by all experience, denounced by every intelligent authority, and has, upon facts undisputed; because they are indisputable, been shown to have brought upon the poorest of our fellow creatures as much misery, affliction, destitution, and crime as was ever produced by any pestilence or calamity with which the country was visited. Let them pause then, he said, before they offer to the country and posterity no other or better testimony of their efforts in public life than that of endeavouring to withhold from them a great advantage, and to perpetuate on the poor an enormous word.

On the Question, that the word "now" stand part of the Question, the House divided:—Ayes 327; Noes 229: Majority 98.

List of the AYES.

Acheson, Visct.	Browne, R. D.	Denison, J. E.	Hindley, C.
Acland, T. D.	Browne, hon. W.	Dennistoun, J.	Hobhouse, rt. hn. Sir J.
A'Court, Capt.	Bruce, Lord E.	D'Eyncourt, rt. hn. C. T.	Hogg, J. W.
Aglionby, H. A.	Buckley, E.	Dickinson, F. H.	Holland, R.
Ainsworth, P.	Bulkeley, Sir R. B. W.	Divett, E.	Hope, G. W.
Aldam, W.	Buller, C.	Douglas, Sir C. E.	Horsman, E.
Anson, hon. Col.	Busfield, W.	Douro, Marq. of	Howard, hon. C. W. G.
Armstrong, Sir A.	Butler, hon. Col.	Drummond, H. H.	Howard, hon. J. K.
Arundel and Surrey, Earl of	Butler, P. S.	Duff, J.	Howard, hon. E. G. G.
Baillie, Col.	Byng, G.	Dugdale, W. S.	Howard, P. H.
Baine, W.	Byng, rt. hon. G. S.	Duke, Sir J.	Howard, Sir R.
Bannerman, A.	Cardwell, E.	Duncan, Visct.	Hughes, W. B.
Barelay, D.	Carew, hon. R. S.	Duncan, G.	Hume, J.
Barkly, H.	Carnegie, hon. Capt.	Dunannon, Visct.	Humphrey, Ald.
Baring, rt. hon. F. T.	Cavendish, hon. C. C.	Duncombe, T.	Hutt, W.
Baring, rt. hon. W. B.	Cavendish, hon. G. H.	Dundas, F.	James, W.
Barnard, E. G.	Chapman, B.	Dundas, D.	James, Sir W. C.
Barnard, E. G.	Chichester, Lord J. L.	Dundas, hon. J. C.	Jermyn, Earl
Barron, Sir H. W.	Christie, W. D.	Easthope, Sir J.	Jervis, J.
Beckett, W.	Clay, Sir W.	Eastnor, Visct.	Jocelyn, Visct.
Bellew, R. M.	Clerk, rt. hon. Sir G.	Elbrington, Visct.	Johnson, Gen.
Benbow, J.	Clive, hon. R. H.	Egerton, W. T.	Johnstone, Sir J.
Berkeley, hon. C.	Cobden, R.	Ellice, rt. hon. E.	Johnstone, H.
Berkeley, hon. Capt.	Cockburn, rt. hn. Sir G.	Elphinstone, Sir H.	Kelly, Sir F.
Berkeley, hon. H. F.	Colebrooke, Sir T. E.	Escott, B.	Labouchere, rt. hon. H.
Bernal, R.	Collett, J.	Esmonde, Sir T.	Lambton, H.
Blake, M. J.	Collins, W.	Estcourt, T. G. B.	Langston, J. H.
Blewitt, R. J.	Copeland, Ald.	Etwall, R.	Lascelles, hon. W. S.
Bodkin, W. H.	Corry, rt. hon. H.	Evans, Sir De Lacy	Layard, Capt.
Botfield, B.	Cowper, hon. W. F.	Evans, W.	Leader, J. T.
Bouverie, hon. E. P.	Craig, W. G.	Ewart, W.	Legh, G. C.
Bowes, J.	Crawford, W. S.	Feilden, W.	Lemon, Sir C.
Bowles, Adm.	Cripps, W.	Fielden, J.	Lincoln, Earl of
Bowring, Dr.	Currie, R.	Ferguson, Col.	Lindsay, hon. Capt.
Boyd, J.	Curtis, H. B.	Ferguson, Sir R. A.	Loch, J.
Bridgman, R.	Dalmeny, Lord	Fitzroy, hon. H.	Loekhart, A. E.
Bright, J.	Dalrymple, Capt.	Fitzroy, Lord C.	Lyall, G.
Brocklehurst, J.	Damer, hon. Col.	Fitzwilliam, hon. G. W.	Macaulay, rt. hon. T. B.
Brotherton, J.	Dashwood, G. H.	Fleetwood, Sir P. H.	Mackinnon, W. A.
		Flower, Sir J.	McCarthy, A.
		Forster, M.	McDonnell, J. M.
		Fox, C. R.	McGeachy, F. A.
		Gibson, T. M.	McNeill, D.
		Gill, T.	McTaggart, Sir J.
		Gisborne, T.	Mahon, Visct.
		Glynne, Sir S. R.	Mainwaring, T.
		Godson, R.	Maitland, T.
		Gore, M.	Mangles, R. D.
		Gore, hon. R.	Marjoribanks, S.
		Coulburn, rt. hon. H.	Marshall, W.
		Graham, rt. hon. Sir J.	Marsland, H.
		Granger, T. C.	Martin, J.
		Greene, T.	Martin, C. W.
		Gregory, W. H.	Masterman, J.
		Grey, rt. hon. Sir G.	Matheson, J.
		Grimsditch, T.	Meynell, Capt.
		Grosvenor, Lord R.	Milnes, R. M.
		Guest, Sir B.	Milton, Visct.
		Hall, Sir J.	Mitcalfe, H.
		Hallyburton, Lord J. F. G.	Mitchell, T. A.
		Hamilton, W. G.	Moffatt, G.
		Hamilton, Lord C.	Molesworth, Sir W.
		Hanmer, Sir J.	Morpeth, Visct.
		Hastie, A.	Morris, D.
		Hutton, Capt. Villiers	Morrison, Gen.
		Hawes, B.	Morrison, J.
		Hay, Sir A. L.	Mostyn, hon. E. M. L.
		Hayter, W. G.	Muntz, G. F.
		Heathcoat, J.	Napier, Sir C.
		Herbert, rt. hon. S.	Neville, R.
		Heron, Sir R.	Newry, Visct.
		Hervey, Lord A.	Norreys, Sir D. J.
		Hill, Lord M.	Northland, Visct.

O'Connell, D.	Somerset, Lord G.	Borthwick, P.	Goring, C.
O'Connell, M. J.	Somerton, Viset.	Bradshaw, J.	Granby, Marq. of
O'Connell, J.	Somerville, Sir W. M.	Bramston, T. W.	Grogan, E.
O'Connor Don	Stansfield, W. R. C.	Brisco, M.	Hale, R. B.
Ogle, S. C. H.	Stanton, W. H.	Broadley, H.	Halford, Sir H.
Ord, W.	Staunton, Sir G. T.	Broadwood, H.	Hall, Col.
Owen, Sir J.	Stewart, P. M.	Brooke, Lord	Halsey, T. P.
Paget, Col.	Stewart, J.	Brownriggo, J. S.	Hamilton, J. H.
Paget, Lord W.	Stuart, Lord J.	Bruen, Col.	Hamilton, G. A.
Paget, Lord A.	Stuart, H.	Buck, L. W.	Harcourt, G. G.
Palmerston, Viset.	Strickland, Sir G.	Buller, Sir J. Y.	Harris, hon. Capt.
Parker, J.	Strutt, E.	Burrell, Sir O. N.	Heathcote, G. J.
Patten, J. W.	Sutton, hon. H. M.	Burroughes, H. N.	Heathcote, Sir W.
Pattison, J.	Tancred, H. W.	Campbell, Sir H.	Heneage, G. H. W.
Pechell, Capt.	Thesiger, Sir F.	Carew, W. H. P.	Heneage, E.
Peel, rt. hon. Sir R.	Thorneley, T.	Cayley, E. S.	Henley, J. W.
Peel, J.	Tollmacho, hon. F. J.	Chandos, Marq. of	Hildyard, T. B. T.
Pendarves, E. W. W.	Tomline, G.	Chapman, A.	Hill, Lord E.
Peonant, hon. Col.	Towneley, J.	Chelsea, Viset.	Hinde, J. H.
Philips, G. R.	Trail, G.	Cholmondeley, hon. H.	Hodgson, F.
Phillips, Sir R. B. P.	Trelawny, J. S.	Christopher, R. A.	Holmes, hon. W. A.
Phillpotts, J.	Trench, Sir F. W.	Churchill, Lord A. S.	Hope, Sir J.
Pigot, rt. hon. D.	Troubridge, Sir E. T.	Chute, W. L. W.	Hope, A.
Plumridge, Capt.	Tufnell, H.	Clayton, R. R.	Hotham, Lord
Polhill, F.	Turner, E.	Clifton, J. T.	Houldsworth, T.
Ponsonby, hon. C.F.A.C.	Vane, Lord H.	Clive, Viset.	Hudson, G.
Powell, C.	Vernon, G. H.	Codrington, Sir W.	Hurst, R. H.
Protheroe, E.	Villiers, hon. G.	Cole, hon. H. A.	Hussey, T.
Pulsford, R.	Villiers, Viset.	Collett, W. R.	Ingestre, Viset.
Rawdon, Col.	Vivian, J. H.	Colquhoun, J. C.	Inglis, Sir R. H.
Reid, Sir J. R.	Vivian, hon. Capt.	Compton, H. C.	Irton, S.
Reid, Col.	Wakley, T.	Coocly, Col.	Jolliffe, Sir W. G. H.
Ricardo, J. L.	Walker, R.	Courtenay, Lord	Jones, Capt.
Rico, E. R.	Wall, C. B.	Cresswell, B.	Kemble, H.
Rich, H.	Warburton, H.	Davies, D. A. S.	Kerrison, Sir E.
Roebuck, J. A.	Ward, H. G.	Deedes, W.	Knight, F. W.
Ronilly, J.	Watson, W. H.	Denison, W. J.	Knightley, Sir C.
Ross, D. R.	Wawn, J. T.	Denison, E. B.	Lascelles, hon. E.
Rumbold, C. E.	Wellesley, Lord C.	Dick, Q.	Law, hon. C. E.
Russell, Lord J.	Wilde, Sir T.	Disraeli, B.	Lawson, A.
Russell, Lord E.	Williams, W.	Dodd, G.	Lefroy, A.
Russell, J. D. W.	Wilshere, W.	Douglas, Sir H.	Lennox, Lord G. H. G.
Rutherford, A.	Winnington, Sir T. E.	Douglas, J. D. S.	Liddell, hon. H. T.
Sandon, Viset.	Wood, G.	Dowdeswell, W.	Lockhart, W.
Scott, R.	Wood, Col.	Drax, J. S. W.	Long, W.
Scrope, G. P.	Wood, Col. T.	Duckworth, Sir J. T. B.	Lopes, Sir R.
Seymour, Lord	Wrightson, W. B.	Duncombe, hon. A.	Lowther, Sir J. H.
Seymour, Sir H. B.	Wynn, rt. hon. C. W. W.	Duncombe, hon. O.	Lowther, hon. Col.
Smith, B.	Wyse, T.	East, J. B.	Lygon, hon. Gen.
Smith, J. A.	Yorke, H. R.	Eaton, R. J.	Maekenzie, T.
Smith, rt. hon. R. V.		Egerton, Sir P.	Mackenzie, W. F.
Smythe, hon. G.		Emlyn, Viset.	Manners, Lord C. S.
Smollett, A.		Entwisle, W.	Manners, Lord J.
Somers, J. P.		Farnham, E. B.	March, Earl of
		Fellowes, E.	Maunsell, T. P.
		Ferrand, W. B.	Maxwell, hon. J. P.
		Filmer, Sir E.	Mildmay, H. St. J.
		Finch, G.	Miles, P. W. S.
		Fitzmaurice, hon. W.	Miles, W.
		Floyer, J.	Morgan, O.
		Forbes, W.	Morgan, C.
		Forester, hon. G. C. W.	Mundy, E. M.
		Forman, T. S.	Neeld, J.
		Fox, S. L.	Neeld, J.
		Frowen, C. H.	Newport, Viset.
		Fuller, A. E.	Norreys, Lord
		Gardner, J. D.	O'Brien, A. S.
		Gaskell, J. M.	Ossulston, Lord
		Gladstone, Capt.	Packo, C. W.
		Gooch, E. S.	Pakington, J. S.
		Gordon, hon. Capt.	Palmer, R.
		Gore, W. O.	Palmer, G.
		Gore, W. H. O.	Pigot, Sir R.

TELLERS.

Young, J.
Baring, H. B.

List of the NOES.

Ackers, J.	Bailey, J., jun.
Adare, Viset.	Baillie, W.
Adderley, C. B.	Balfour, J. M.
Alexander, N.	Banks, G.
Alford, Viset.	Barrington, Viset.
Allix, J. P.	Baskerville, T. B. M.
Antrobus, E.	Bell, M.
Arbuthnott, hon. H.	Bell, J.
Archbold, R.	Benett, J.
Archdall, Capt. M.	Bennet, P.
Arkwright, G.	Bentineck, Lord G.
Astell, W.	Bentineck, Lord H.
Austen, Col.	Blackburne, J. I.
Bagge, W.	Blackstone, W. S.
Bagot, hon. W.	Blakemore, R.
Bailey, J.	Boldero, H. G.

Plumptre, J. P.
Pollington, Visct.
Powell, C.
Rashleigh, W.
Rendlesham, Lord
Repton, G. W. J.
Richards, R.
Rolleston, Col.
Round, C. G.
Round, J.
Russell, C.
Ryder, hon. G. D.
Sanderson, R.
Scott, hon. F.
Seymer, H. K.
Shaw, rt. hon. F.
Sheppard, T.
Shirley, E. J.
Shirley, E. P.
Sibthorp, Col.
Smith, A.
Smith, Sir H.
Sotheron, T. H. S.
Spooners, R.
Spry, Sir S. T.
Stanley, E.
Stuart, J.

Taylor, E.
Taylor, J. A.
Thompson, Ald.
Thornhill, G.
Tollemache, J.
Tower, C.
Trevor, hon. G. R.
Trollope, Sir J.
Trotter, J.
Turnor, C.
Tyrrell, Sir J. T.
Verner, Col.
Vivian, J. E.
Vyse, R. H. R. H.
Vyryan, Sir R. R.
Waddington, H. S.
Walpole, S. H.
Walsh, Sir J. B.
Williams, T. P.
Wedehouse, E.
Worcester, Marq. of
Worsley, Lord
Wyndham, J. H. O.
Yorke, hon. E. T.
TELLERS.
Beresford, Major
Newdegate, C. N.

Absent—Noes.

Acland, Sir T. D.	Ker, D. S.
Ashley, hon. H.	Kirk, P.
Attwood, J.	Leslie, C. P.
Baillie, H. J.	Lindsay, H. H.
Baldwin, C. B.	Marton, G.
Bernard, Lord	Nicholl, rt. hon. J.
Castlereagh, Visct.	Oswald, A.
Colville, C. R.	Præd, W. T.
Coote, Sir C. H.	Price, R.
Egerton, Lord F.	Pusey, P.
Hamilton, C. J. B.	Vesey, hon. T.
Hardy, J.	Welby, G. E.
Hayes, Sir E.	Whitmore, T. C.
Hornby, J.	Wortley, hon. J. S.
Hussey, A.	Wyndham, Col. C.

Main Question agreed to.

Bill read a Third Time and passed.

MR. E. YORKE was understood to say, that, before the Bill passed, he was desirous of making a few remarks. ["Oh, oh!" "Order, order!" and great confusion.]

MR. SPEAKER: I had already put the question that "the Bill do pass" before the hon. Member rose. The Bill is now passed.

MR. E. YORKE trusted the House would permit him to state the objections he entertained to the title which had been given to this Bill. ["Oh!" "Order!" and great confusion.] He begged to move that the House do adjourn. What did this Bill profess to do? ["Question!"] To displace the labour of our own hard-worked countrymen in order to give employment to foreign serfs. He thought the Bill ought to be called the Foreign Lands Improvement Bill. Fraudulent things and suspicious persons often had aliases, and he thought the measure ought also to be called the Ministerial Mutability and Consolidation Bill. He was sorry he was not able to catch the Speaker's eye before the division, or he should have moved that the Bill be entitled "The Foreign Lands Improvement Bill." The hon. Member concluded by withdrawing his Motion for adjournment.

House adjourned at a quarter past Four o'clock.

Paired off (Non-Official).

NOES.	AYES.
Price, R.	Ellis, W.
Lindsay, H.	Listowel, Lord
Bruce, C. C.	Maule, F.
Brooke, Sir A.	Grattan, H.
Vesey, hon. T.	O'Brien, C.
Bunbury, T.	O'Ferrall, M.
Barneby, J.	Fitzgerald, R.
Ffolliott, J.	White, S.
Du Pre, G. C.	Ellice, E., jun.
Bateson, T.	Kirk, P.
Attwood, M.	Wortley, rt. hon. J.
Wynn, Sir W.	Oswald, A.
Hepburn, Sir T.	Blake, Sir V.
Hodgson, R.	Phillips, M.
Sheridan, R.	Langton, G.
Macleane, D.	Whitmore, T.
Hampden, R.	Præd, W.
Bruges, L.	Baillie, H.
Baring, T.	Egerton, Lord F.
Acton, Col.	Maenamara, Major

Absent—Ayes.

Berkeley, hon. G. F.	Osborne, Capt. B.
Bodkin, J. S.	Power, J.
Buller, E.	Price, Sir R.
Callaghan, D.	Pryse, P.
Clements, Lord	Redington, T. N.
Corbally, M. E.	Roche, E. B.
Dawson, hon. T. V.	Sheil, rt. hon. R. L.
Dundas, Adm.	Shelburne, Earl of
French, F.	Sheridan, R. B.
Hoskins, K.	Standish, C.
Howard, hon. Capt.	Stanley, hon. W. G.
Kelly, J.	Stuart, W. V.
Maher, N.	Talbot, C. R. M.
Martin, T. B.	Tuite, H. M.
O'Brien, T.	Wemyss, Capt.
O'Brien, J.	Westonra, hon. Col. J. C.
O'Brien, W. S.	White, H.
O'Connell, M.	

ANALYSIS.
THE MAJORITY—AYES 329.

MEMBERS FOR	Conser- vatives.	Libe- rals.	Total.
English counties... ..	12	13	25
English boroughs	68	142	210
English universities	2	—	2
Welsh counties	4	—	4
Welsh boroughs	3	6	9
Irish counties	4	16	20
Irish boroughs	7	19	26
Scotch counties	5	9	14
Scotch boroughs... ..	1	18	19
	106	223	329

THE MINORITY—NOES 231.

MEMBERS FOR	Conser- vatives.	Libe- rals.	Total.
English counties	103	4	107
English boroughs	78	4	82
English universities	2	—	2
Welsh counties	8	—	8
Welsh boroughs	2	—	2
Irish counties	13	1	14
Irish boroughs	2	—	2
Irish universities	2	—	2
Scotch counties	10	—	10
Scotch boroughs	1	—	1
Isle of Wight	1	—	1
	222	9	231

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

MEMBERS ABSENT.	Conser- vatives.	Libe- rals.	Total.
Voted on third reading	328	232	560
English counties (pairs included)	7	3	10
English boroughs	18	11	29
Welsh counties	1	2	3
Welsh boroughs	2	1	3
Irish counties	10	20	30
Irish boroughs	3	8	11
Scotch counties	5	1	6
Scotch boroughs	—	3	3
Sudbury vacant	—	—	2
The Speaker	—	—	1
	374	281	658

SUMMARY.

MAJORITY (TELLERS INCLUDED).			
Conservatives	...	...	106
Liberals	...	...	223
			329

MINORITY.

Conservatives	...	...	222
Liberals	...	...	9
			231
Absent (Conservatives)	...	...	46
Ditto (Liberals)	...	...	49
			95
Speaker	...	...	1
Seats Vacant—Sudbury	...	...	2
			658

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Monday, May 18, 1846.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL.

The DUKE of WELLINGTON moved that the Corn Importation Bill be read a First Time.

The DUKE of RICHMOND: My Lords, it is not my intention on the present occasion to go into the whole merits of the question before your Lordships, nor to dilate upon the danger to be apprehended to the country from a repeal of the present Corn Law; but, my Lords, I cannot permit the Bill to be read even a first time without entering my protest against it, and making a few observations upon its principle. My Lords, I contend that Sir R. Peel was not warranted in proposing this measure, nor justified by the exigency he assumed in abandoning, as he has done, all protection to British industry; he who had advocated so eloquently and so unanswerably, as regards argument, for so many years, and who, moreover, with a large majority of the House of Commons,

was returned in 1841 to support that advocacy. My Lords, I believe it to be a thing impossible that the measure can be laid upon the Table of your Lordships' House, without the violation of promises and the breaking of pledges. I, for one, my Lords, am very sorry to see, at the present day, that a great distinction is attempted to be drawn between public honour and private honour. Sir R. Peel is a man who bears a most unexceptionable character in private life—he is a man whose word is his bond at Tamworth; but, nevertheless, he does not hesitate to withdraw, at the very doors of the House of Commons, from an agreement proposed by himself, and unwillingly acquiesced in by the agricultural party in 1841. He throws over his former principles, he repudiates his former speeches, and he refutes with a negative all his own former arguments in favour of protection. Not content with this, Sir R. Peel not only yields to the clamour of his opponents, but turns round and joins them, abandoning his friends, through whose means he came into power, and giving his assistance to the Leaguers against those

who had previously supported him, their only fault being, as I stated, my Lords, placing too great a reliance upon the stability of his principles, and reposing too generous a confidence in the consistency of his public character. Putting aside, my Lords, however, the danger which this Bill will bring about—and that it will bring about a vast amount of danger to the institutions of the country I see no cause to doubt—putting that aside, my Lords, I ask your Lordships if such conduct is to be pursued by a statesman, and the leader of a great party in the State, how can you retain the confidence of the people of this country in any Government—a confidence, my Lords, which I hesitate not to say is absolutely necessary for the well-being of this great country in the trying times that are approaching—and we know not how soon they may come? If the public at large can repose no confidence in public men, which will be the result of this measure, how can you, my Lords, hope to secure good government in this country, and anticipate and prevent that anarchy and confusion which are now so rife in the land? My Lords, I do not wish to speak harshly of any man, and I disdain to impute motives in political matters; but at the same time, my Lords, I must give expression to my deep regret at the events that have occurred in this country since last November. My Lords, Sir R. Peel had one straightforward course to pursue, but he did not pursue it. Instead of throwing up office, his course should have been to recommend to his Sovereign to dissolve Parliament, and appeal to the sense of the country upon the question at issue. As it is, the people of this country have had no voice in these great changes which he proposes. He should have gone to the country, my Lords, upon this question, and have asked every city, every borough, and every county in this great Empire, whether they had changed their sentiments on the subject, either because of some disease in the potato crop of the season, or for some supposed large collection of money made by the Anti-Corn-Law League? My Lords, he should have gone to the country, and should, in doing so, have asked the constituencies to release him and his servile followers from those engagements which led to their accession to power, and the overthrow of the Government which preceded them. My Lords, we have a strong Parliamentary claim against the progress of this Bill any farther; because it will be in your Lordships' remembrance that it was

described, on its first introduction to the public notice, as part of a great and comprehensive plan within the contemplation of the Government. If this description be correct, I hold, my Lords, that we are perfectly justified in asking to see the whole of that plan laid upon the Table of your Lordships' House before we shall be called upon to give an opinion upon it. But my noble Friends of the protection party are willing to waive that objection. We are not prepared to ask for anything which would cause delay; and we are satisfied, therefore, to accede to the Motion which I am informed is to be made this evening, to fix the consideration of the whole question for this day se'nnight. We thus show that in the course we take in reference to it we have no factious motives, and that we are willing to waive all formal objections: Confiding in the justice of our cause, we only ask "a fair field and no favour," and we believe that with that fair field and no favour we shall be able to convince your Lordships that the arguments so ably and eloquently stated in another place in favour of that cause—arguments of which I am bound to say there has been no attempt at contradiction worth naming—we shall be able, I trust, my Lords, to induce your Lordships to do that which I deem your most paramount duty—namely, to prevent rash legislation in consequence of the clamour of interested individuals, who, better knowing the Prime Minister, knew how to work upon his fears, for they never could persuade him that his judgment was wrong until he lost his head by that feeling which, I am happy to say, is not a common one among the natives of this country—cowardly political fear.

LORD BROUGHAM: I wish only to express my entire concurrence in the course my noble Friend proposes to take, and my entire dissent from every other word he has uttered. Nothing could be more fair, and candid, and open, and manly—in one word, in every way more fitting and consistent with the character and conduct of my noble Friend, than the course he had taken in objecting to the first reading of a Bill sent up from the other House, and in waiting to discuss the measure fairly and fully on this day se'nnight. But, my Lords, I enter in one sentence my solemn protest against its being said that a statesman who, yielding to reflection, and reason, and conviction, conscientiously changes opinions which he formerly entertained, and acts upon his altered convictions, has not only committed

an act of dishonour—an act impeaching the integrity of his character, and lowering his fair fame and name among statesmen; but that a statesman, placed in such circumstances, is called upon to vindicate his honour, his integrity, and his motives. “But,” says my noble Friend, “why not dissolve Parliament, and appeal to the people?” My Lords, I am guilty, if my right hon. Friend at the head of the Government deserves reproach for not dissolving Parliament on a great question like this; for I was a friend of the Reform Bill in 1831, and I never dreamed of dissolving Parliament and appealing to the people till we were defeated by the Parliament which was then assembled. If that Parliament had not been against us, who was wild enough to fancy that we ever should have dissolved Parliament in the spring of 1831? It may, however, be said that I was always a reformer—that I was always a supporter of Parliamentary reform, and that I had not changed my opinion on that question. But, my Lords, some of my Colleagues, some of my most esteemed Colleagues—if I mistake not, my noble Friend (the Duke of Richmond) himself, who now charges Sir Robert Peel with not dissolving Parliament and appealing to the people, did, upon reflection, honestly, conscientiously, and without the shadow of imputation resting upon them, come round to my great delight, to the great glory of themselves, to the great edification of that cause, and to the great benefit of the people of this country, and became advocates of reform; and they never proposed a dissolution, or talked of a dissolution, till the Parliament then assembled was found not so fit as we could have wished for effecting our objects.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND: I never voted against reform in the whole course of my life, and therefore the noble and learned Lord’s attack upon me falls to the ground. I repeat that I never voted against the Reform Bill. I voted for it. My noble and learned Friend will recollect that, on the occasion to which he refers, Parliament was dissolved in the midst of a very violent feeling which existed throughout the country; but I do not find the advocates of free trade coming to this House with petitions in favour of the measures proposed by the Government. There is nothing like the agitation in favour of free trade that there was in favour of reform.

THE MARQUESS OF LONDONDERRY thought it would be as well if noble Lords did not allow themselves to be carried

away by personal feelings in discussing a question of this nature. He had occupied a seat in their Lordships’ House long enough to see many individuals, as well as those upon whom the noble Duke had made an attack, change their opinions on public questions; and he must observe that the noble Duke himself had repeatedly changed his position in that House. And yet the noble Duke charged the Prime Minister, who had had long and mature experience, with changing his opinion on a question of this nature! He (the Marquess of Londonderry) was prepared to give his unhesitating support to the measure of Her Majesty’s Government.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND: I wish the noble and gallant Marquess would practise what he preaches. The noble Marquess deprecates personalities, and then he makes a violent personal attack upon me; but I am not surprised at it. I stated that I did not impute any motives to Sir R. Peel; but I was anxious, on this day, to express my opinion as to the conduct of the Government, in order that it might not be necessary for me to do so on the second reading of the Bill. I feel most strongly, and I think I have a right to do so, that a great body of persons in this country have been treated unfairly; and I determined not to smother my opinion, but to state it openly, let who might object to it. I took this course because I am most anxious that nothing of a personal nature should take place on the second reading of the Bill. I thought it more fair to all parties to say what I wished to say on the subject now.

THE MARQUESS OF LONDONDERRY said, he had not intended to make any personal attack upon the noble Duke. He regretted that the noble Duke should have made a personal attack upon Sir R. Peel, because their duty was to consider the Bill, and not the changes in opinion of the persons by whom it was proposed. He would only say, that the noble Duke (the Duke of Richmond) had changed his opinions as often probably as any other person.

THE EARL OF RIPON: I am extremely glad to hear that it is the intention of my noble Friend on the cross bench to conduct the discussion which is to take place next week on this important subject on principles which, if adhered to, will command the approbation of the House. The noble Duke expressed a hope that there would be an absence of all personalities on the second reading of the Bill. I am not surprised that my noble Friend has exhaled

his feelings on the present occasion; and I am particularly glad to hear that we are not likely to have a repetition of such an attack. I am glad of it, partly, my Lords, on my own account—but much more, I can assure the noble Duke, on account of my right hon. Friend who has been the special object of his bitter attack. I well know the situation in respect of this question in which I stand. I know the representations which may be made; I know the censures which may be cast upon me; I know what reproaches may be heaped upon me; but, my Lords, I am prepared to meet them on my own part, and on the part of those of my Colleagues with whom I share the awful responsibility of having introduced this measure. My noble Friend has talked of a distinction which, he says, prevails in our days between public and private honour. That, my Lords, is a distinction which I do not recognise; and I should not think that I retained my character privately, as a man of honour, if I could not maintain my public character in the same way. I beg to say to my noble Friend, whatever threats he may hold out—

“There is no terror, Cassius, in your threats,
For I am arm'd so strong in honesty
That they pass by me as the idle wind,
Which I respect not.”

Bill read 1^a.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Monday, May 18, 1846.

CUSTOMS DUTIES BILL.

On the motion that the Amendments made by the Committee be now read a Second Time,

LORD G. BENTINCK said: Sir, I rise to oppose the second reading of the Report on this measure, founded as it is on the principle of remitting duties of the customs instead of the excise. So long, Sir, as we levy the enormous amount which we derive from the excise, I think there is no good reason why we should remit these duties of customs, amounting to no less than 2,400,000*l.*, which amount of reduction could be applied more beneficially to excise duties, pressing as they do more inconveniently and severely on the people of this country. This is one strong though

simple ground upon which I object to proceeding with this report. Another ground is, that if we are to reduce customs duties in preference to excise, we ought to apply ourselves to the reduction of the duties on the produce of those countries which take most of our produce—that we should give the preference to duties on articles which do not come into competition with the industry of this country. By a return laid on our Table by the First Minister of the Crown, it appears, that when excise duties are reduced, we are able to save an enormous sum in the expense of collection, reducing the number of officers employed therein, while at the same time we are relieving trade of many restrictions and inconveniences, and giving a spring to industry. When the excise duties were reduced on auctions and upon glass to the extent of 900,000*l.*, the cost of collection to the amount of 52,000*l.* was reduced, and the salaries of 450 officers saved to the public; whereas it appears that when customs duties are reduced, the expense of collection is not reduced, for not a single officer can be dispensed with. Therefore, as you reduce the customs' duties the amount of revenue so lost is greater, and the extent of relief to the country is in the same proportion less than in the case of similar reductions in excise duties. These would be sufficient reasons, did none other exist, for not reducing the customs duties in preference to the excise. But there is another reason, perhaps even of greater force. When you reduce customs duties, the foreigner shares with the consumer in this country the benefit of the reduction. This has been shown in the case of the timber duties, on which at least one-third of the reduction has gone into the pockets of the foreigner. But if you reduce the duties on excise articles—soap, malt, bricks, &c., &c.—the whole of the benefit is derived by the subjects of Great Britain. I cannot understand upon what principle, so long as there are any excise duties to be reduced, the Legislature should prefer to levy these duties, and to reduce the duties of customs. The excise duty on soap, for instance, amounts to 36 per cent. *ad valorem*; and it is admitted on all hands that soap is an article which, next to the absolute necessities of life, adds more than anything else to the comforts of the poor; and it is equally important in manufactures. Then there is an excise duty upon hops—a duty realizing to the revenue only some 200,000*l.* or 300,000*l.*, but yet not less than 2*d.* per

pound, and levied with restrictions most inconvenient to the producer, as the hop-grower cannot dry his hops without twenty-four hours' notice to the excise officer to attend the process. Then, Sir, as to the malt duty. As it amounts to 5,000,000*l.* per annum, it would not be possible, with a surplus of 2,400,000*l.*, to remit the whole of that duty; but at a future period the surplus might be larger; and there are some reasons for contemplating the possibility of remitting this duty; as, for example, there might be a tax, perhaps, on beer, which might realize half the amount of the malt duty, and thus the House might be enabled to take off altogether the other half of the duty, and entirely relieve the maltster and farmer from the restrictions which press so heavily upon them. Mr. Huskisson well said, that the malt duty amounted to 60 or 70 per cent. on the value of the barley, and that the restrictions and inconveniences incident to the excise were equivalent to at least 50 per cent. more. The malt duty is fixed, whatever the quality of the barley; the result of which is, that the malting is almost restricted to the superior barley. The regulations of the Excise impose the most severe restrictions on the farmer to prevent him from steeping his barley. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has, indeed, declared that experiments had been made by learned professors, not by agriculturists, proving that raw barley was as good for the fattening of cattle as malted barley. But the opinion of these learned professors is utterly at variance with those of practical agriculturists; and Mr. Hudson, one of the largest graziers and farmers in the country, who expended 10,000*l.* a year in oil-cake alone, has challenged the Government and their professors to a trial of the virtue of malted barley, at the rate of five quarters malted to seven quarters of raw. I find that as Her Majesty's Ministers like small numbers of examples in financial matters, so they like short numbers in examples on cattle. [The noble Lord quoted two examples from the Report of the Commissioners to inquire into the effects of Malt in fattening Cattle, of the feeding of two cows and two bullocks with malt and with barley.] The noble Lord proceeded—I think, Sir, when I come to analyse the report of 102 pages, I shall find that the experiments there mentioned are not worth a great deal more than the three years' experience of the present Government. I think it must be admitted, at all events

so far as the inconvenience is concerned which these restrictions impose upon the farmers, that the question remains just where it did before any experiments were made. Having dealt with this part of the question, I am unwilling to occupy the time of the House upon the subject of silk manufactures. I object to the measure before the House on the ground that it is an unnecessary interference with the due protection to all these interests. I have never been in favour of any prohibitory duty; but I cannot understand why, as long as you consent to levy a duty of 70 per cent. upon malt—as long as you levy a duty upon the grain of this country before it is distilled into spirits, making it altogether a duty of 400 per cent. before the barley, or any grain, whatever it might be, can be converted into spirits—as long as you levy a duty of 36 per cent., *ad valorem*, upon soap—and as long as you levy a duty of something like 25 per cent. upon bricks, I cannot understand upon what principle you abolish duties on foreign commodities when imported, none of them exceeding the 30 per cent. which you have hitherto levied upon corn, and yet levy, generally speaking, upon silk. I am aware there are some articles on which the First Minister of the Crown remitted duty amounting to 147 per cent. It is upon caps and turbans. I believe that is one of the compensations offered to the agriculturists. I do not know to what portion of the agriculturists this relief will apply. I know not whether Her Majesty's Ministers intend that the wives of the agricultural labourers, or the labourers themselves, or the farmers, or their wives, are to deck themselves out in these turbans and caps of French manufacture. As far as the agricultural interest is concerned, we would rather see the bonnet makers, and hatters, and dress-makers of this country undisturbed in the enjoyment of their present monopoly, than accept any such compensation at the hands of the Government. Then, Sir, I will refer to the article of timber. The duty reduced upon Baltic timber already has amounted to 30*s.* per load. What has been the result? Why, that while the price of English oak was reduced 12*s.* a load, upon an average of the last three years, compared with the three years that Baltic timber was admitted into competition, and whilst the price of Canada timber was also reduced, the Baltic growers were enabled so far to increase their price, that they have put 10*s.* upon each load into

their pockets for the last three years; and this last year they have profited to the amount of 17s. 6d. upon each load. It is perfectly clear, therefore, that the Baltic growers have now got a monopoly given to them by your measures; and you are proposing now to increase that monopoly, by giving them the advantage of 10s. a load more. They are amply protected by the difference between the freight from Canada and the Baltic of 20s. a load; and, therefore, it is impossible for the Canadian timber growers to compete with the Baltic growers. It is impossible for them to afford to sell their timber at a lower price than they sell it now; and the result will be, that the Baltic growers, not being exposed to competition, will be able to maintain the high price their timber now bears. Perhaps it will be argued that it is the reduction of the price of foreign timber that has caused the great consumption lately; but we have had the authority of the hon. Gentleman the Member for Sunderland (Mr. Hudson) that there would not be one foot less of timber consumed on the railways in this country, whether the duty was 55s., or whether it was reduced, as you now propose to reduce it, to 15s. Upon an average, there is now consumed upon railways in this country 5,000,000 cubic feet of timber. This would be equally consumed, whether the price was 10s. a load more, or 10s. a load less. If the consumption had remained the same as it was formerly, it would have given an enormous increase of revenue to this country. In the year 1841, there were imported from the Baltic 561,313 loads of timber. This was composed of timber of all descriptions. In the year 1845, the timber so imported had risen up to 1,105,224 loads. This great increase in number was occasioned by the great railway speculation; and I am sure it never entered into the consideration of any railway company whether the price of timber was 4l. 10s. or 4d. The price was never for a moment taken into calculation in any discussion before the railway companies. Taking 30s. as the duty, the loss to the revenue would amount, upon the quantity of timber I have mentioned, to 1,725,336l. This is the amount of duty which, if it had been received, might have enabled you to reduce a very great number of those excise duties that are now inflicted. You might have remitted the soap duties, brick duties, and hop duties, if you had such a sum of money as that to deal with. Well, then, let us see whether the

reduction of these duties has had the effect which the manufacturers of this country anticipated it would have—which the hon. Gentleman the Member for Bolton imagined it would have in 1839. That hon. Gentleman thought that the reduction in the timber duties would have induced foreign countries to reduce their tariffs, and take more of our manufactures in return. None of these foreign Governments have as yet reduced their tariffs. We are told that Prussia will; but it has not yet done so. Has the remission of duty on our part induced them to take any more of your cotton manufactures? I find in a statement that has been made, upon the accuracy of which great reliance can be placed—I mean a pamphlet I have quoted before, entitled “The Free Trade Policy Examined, by a Liverpool Merchant,” and certainly one of the ablest pamphlets written upon the subject—it says, as regards these countries, Denmark, Prussia, Sweden, and Norway, the export of plain cottons in the year 1843 amounted to 2,212,936 yards; but in the year 1845, far from increasing, the export of cottons only amounted to 2,048,678 yards, being a decrease of 10 per cent. on the amount of plain cottons exported from this country. On printed cottons, I find there was an export to those four countries of 1,207,198 yards in 1843; and in the year 1845 the quantity decreased to 971,156 yards, thus showing a decrease of 20 per cent. Then it seems it is vain for you to attempt to entice foreign countries to take your manufactures by importing their produce either free or at a low reduction of duty. You cannot, as has been ably said by my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury (Mr. Disraeli), break down their hostile tariffs by your free imports. This was not the policy of Pitt. His policy was by treaty and negotiation to obtain reciprocal advantages for the commerce of the country. In his great measure of commercial regulation with France, Mr. Pitt distinctly founded that measure upon a ground the very reverse of the policy adopted by Her Majesty’s Ministers. He distinctly founded his policy upon this ground, not that the free air of competition was good for the producers of this country, but that the great manufactures of France, and the great productions of France, should not clash with the great productions of this country. Mr. Pitt compared the French and English to two traders, in different spheres of life, not at all interfering one with the other; and the policy of his

measure was this, that whilst the duties upon French goods were reduced, especially upon French brandy, about 100 per cent., he bargained that the duties upon the manufactures of English production should on no one article exceed 15 per cent.; 15, 10, and 5 per cent., were the duties levied by the French Government upon articles of British manufacture. Mr. Pitt argued, that for every 1,000*l.* France gave to England, she must have given a million. His language, in speaking of France, was that it was ridiculous to imagine that the French would consent to yield up advantages without any idea of a return. But Her Majesty's Ministers have now put it out of their power to give any return. They have given away all they had to give. France will take, Russia will take, Prussia will take, the United States of America will take, all the boons you have offered them, and kindly thank you for the same, and in return they will give you nothing. You should have held back these advantages and bargained with them, and then you might have induced them to reduce their tariffs. Mr. Pitt did not propose to admit the grain of France or any other produce which would clash with the policy of this country. That was a sound principle of a great Minister; and did that policy differ from the policy of Mr. Huskisson or that of Mr. Canning? Why, when the United States of America raised their duties on rolled iron in the year 1823 or 1824, did Mr. Canning sit down in silence and endure that the manufacturers of this country should have higher duties placed upon their manufactures without a return of any value? No. He issued an Order in Council, and took immediate means to be avenged upon them for the high duties they had placed upon the manufactures of this country. What was the statement of Mr. Huskisson in that House, in the year 1828, when speaking of the American tariff? When that tariff was raised upon cotton, and especially upon woollen, the Americans entered into a nice calculation to know how much they would be affected by our reduction of 5*d.* a pound upon wool, and having ascertained that it would make a difference of 14 per cent. in the practical protection which the manufacturers of the United States received, they raised their duty immediately. Mr. Huskisson, referring to that tariff and the proceedings of the United States Government, said that if they persevered in their course he would take measures to retaliate. That Gentle-

man asked, how should it be expected, that if you submit passively to such proceedings as those on the part of the United States, you can expect that other countries will continue to allow your produce and manufactures to enter their markets at low duties? Mr. Huskisson even, in the article of cotton, said, you must put a duty upon cotton at once and for all, and encourage the growth of it in your own East Indies. He referred to what protection had done for indigo; and said, that the time was when you had to seek your indigo from foreign markets, but by the cultivation of indigo in the East Indies, we had been enabled to supply ourselves, and so it would be with cotton. That Gentleman advised them to give to the East Indies a protecting duty on cotton, and it would then supply us with the article, and we should be no longer obliged to obtain it from America. It is very clear, that Mr. Huskisson's notions of free trade were not for us to have free trade without any reciprocity. If the right hon. Baronet pretends to be a disciple of Mr. Huskisson, he is certainly not walking in the true course pointed out by that Gentleman. Neither is he walking in the course of policy followed by Mr. Canning or Mr. Pitt. But what is the course adopted by Her Majesty's Government? They appear to take a pleasure in reducing the duty on the products of those countries which have hostile tariffs. Their reductions are chiefly upon the products of the United States, of the countries of the Zollverein, of Russia, Prussia, Norway, and Sweden; and these are the countries which have the highest protective duties. It appears to me that the wiser policy would be to reduce the duties upon the products of those countries which take our manufactures at a low duty, and to reduce the duties more especially upon the products of those countries which, having no ships of their own, would be obliged to carry their produce in the ships of this country. Thus China, with a population of 300,000,000—China, which levies a duty of 6½ per cent. upon our goods—China which has no ships of her own to carry her produce—China, which is removed to such a distance, that it requires a Chinaman thirteen months to make a voyage from this country to China and back—there is an opportunity, if you are determined to reduce your customs duties—there is a great opportunity for you to encourage your trade with China. You raise 250 per cent. of duty upon tea, which, next

to bread, has become one of the necessities of life to the poor in this country. On what principle do you say that you will not continue to levy a duty which never since 1842 has amounted to 27 per cent. on foreign corn, and yet continue to levy a duty of 250 per cent. upon tea, which is paid by the poor? We have in the reports of the Canadian newspapers which were received two days ago, an example of what the reduction of the duties on tea will do in the way of consumption. I see it stated in the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Legislative Assembly of Canada, that the consumption of tea in Canada has risen tenfold since they reduced the duty. Well, then, it is clear that if we reduce the duty on tea in this country, where the taste for tea has increased to a greater extent than it can possibly have done in the colder climate of North America, there can be no doubt that here also its consumption would be greatly increased. But, instead of that, you reduce the duties on the produce of those countries which will not take your manufactures in return, and which already engross the greater part of the carrying trade. Take the United States for example. I find by a report that the clearances from the port of Liverpool to ports in the United States, Boston, Charleston, Baltimore, New Orleans, New York, and Philadelphia, in the year 1845, consisted of 127 British vessels, measuring 79,417 tons, and no less than 463 vessels of the United States, measuring 305,229 tons, so that four-fifths of the whole tonnage employed in that trade belong to the United States of America. By another statement, which appears to be well authenticated, it seems that of the whole shipping trade of Liverpool half is employed in the trade to our own Colonies. Therefore I think that the policy which is pursued in the measures before the House, is one which is not conducive either to the maritime strength or to the national prosperity of the country. I have said on former occasions, and I think it cannot be too often urged upon the House, that the disadvantage of the trade of this country being carried on in foreign ships, is not limited to the freights or to the crews employed, or even to the shipping interest itself. It is not limited to the shipowners, or even to the sailors, but it extends much further. The provisioning of those ships amounts to an enormous sum in the course of a year. It is perfectly clear that when a British ship comes home, and the men are paid off in a British port, all

the wages earned by the seamen are spent in that British port. The publican, the baker, and the slopseller, the tailor, all come in for their share. But if the goods of a foreign country are carried in the ships of a foreign country, the sailors spend none of their money in this country. They return home—they are paid in a foreign country, and in that country they expend all their wages. Therefore, I think that many of those classes who now cry out for free trade will find their own profits greatly curtailed, if the policy of Her Majesty's Ministers should issue in more of the carrying trade of this country being transferred from the shipping interest of this country to foreign ships. I am well aware, that when I urge the question of the shipping interests upon the notice of the House and the country, I shall be told in return, that though it is perfectly true that the shipping interest in the Baltic has increased threefold within the last five years, yet our own shipping has increased also. But what is that, if all other nations beat us in the race? It is no good to us that we progress at a certain pace, if all other nations should far outstrip us; and when we reflect that the number of seamen employed by us in the trade with the United States so long ago as 1769 was 28,000, and that now they only amount to 9,000, it must be admitted that the great falling-off in the employment of our seamen in those countries which from Colonies have become independent States, is matter for very important consideration. Coupled with that comes the question of the Canadas. I am aware an impression has gone forth, that notwithstanding the untoward appearance of Her Majesty's Ministers being in a minority in the Canadas, which I noticed on a former occasion—an impression has gone forth that Her Majesty's Ministers have obtained a great triumph, and that the Canadas are entirely satisfied with their policy. I confess that after having read the debates and the Canada newspapers, I am at a loss to discover on what those who take this view of the question ground their opinion. True it is, that the first minority in which Her Majesty's Ministers were put in the Legislative Assembly of Canada has been overcome; but how has it been overcome? It has been overcome by the measures which have been introduced not coming up to the measures which were recommended by the right hon. Secretary of State for the Colonial Department. They have declined to adopt free trade; but they

say there is a 3s. duty, which has been placed upon the frontier for the protection of the agriculture of Great Britain; and we consent to remove that duty. They say if you desire it we shall remove that protection; we shall consent to allow wheat to pass in bond, as it were, for exportation to the mother country. But we will not consent to adopt measures of free trade as the policy of our country. But does that express satisfaction with the measures of Government? None whatever. They say, looking at our hopeless position—looking to the two parties in this House, and seeing that each of them threatens to annihilate the interests of Canada, we consent only because we feel that we have no power to resist. What is the language that is held, not by the party of M. Papineau—not by the party of M. Baldwin—not by the Opposition; but what is the language that is held by Her Majesty's servants themselves in Canada? What is the language that is still held by Her Majesty's Solicitor General? At a meeting in Toronto that gentleman had formerly said that if the object of the Imperial measures was by gradual degrees to attach the Canadian colonists to the United States of America, that they would not be the culpable parties, but that the Imperial Legislature, over whom they had no control, must bear the blame. Is he converted now? Does he think the measures which he formerly denounced, now to be for the benefit of the inhabitants of Canada? Far from it. This is the language, even whilst he advocates them, which he holds concerning the measures of Her Majesty's Ministers. He says, if ever there was a time when the trade, the commercial existence, the means of revenue, and the credit of Canada were in danger, it is this. What satisfaction with the measures of Her Majesty's Government is to be found in language like this? Then what says Mr. Draper, the Attorney General? He says, the effects of these alterations threaten evils of the greatest consequence. What satisfaction is there to be discovered here with the measures of Her Majesty's Government? Can any one discover contentment with Her Majesty's Ministers, and approbation of the Imperial policy, in language such as this? But here is the reason which he assigns for supporting the measures of free trade; that is to say, for reducing the frontier duty on wheat. I see it coming, and I tell the people of this province, it is no use shutting their eyes to

the fact, that if we cannot make our works pay for what they have cost, we had better declare for bankruptcy and repudiation at once. Well, then, what is the feeling of the trade? I hold in my hand a letter from Mr. Young, of the firm of Buchanan, Hamilton, and Co., the largest firm in Canada—a firm whose capital, as I am informed, amounts to the sum of a quarter of a million sterling, whose business is entirely what is called commission business—that is, the exportation of goods of all descriptions to Canada—what is the language which he holds? He writes from Hamilton. He says, that the drawback bill which the American Congress have passed, and the bill permitting the warehousing of goods which is before them, show that the Americans are alive to the new importation trade which is about to be opened up, and to take advantage of it; that the Erie Canal Company have reduced their dues on goods to the lowest point, and that offers have been made to carry goods from New York to Hamilton through the lakes by steam at the following rates—pig iron, 22½ cents, that is 11¼d.; sugar, 28 cents, or 1s. 2d.; fine goods, 33 cents, or 1s. 4½d. per 100 lbs. each. This was a cost with which they could not compete in conveying goods to Hamilton by the St. Lawrence; and the writer goes on to say, this will make New York a much more important point than it would otherwise be, and it will greatly lessen the importance of Montreal. This is the trade with which we were told Canada West was not concerned. The writer went on to say, this, of course, will be a great injury to British shipping, and a corresponding benefit to the Americans. The practice of a great trading interest is worth more than a hundred statements, or a hundred arguments. I gather from the last paragraph of this letter, that this great trading firm, whose capital amounts to a quarter of a million sterling, hold the opinion that, in consequence of the alteration in our commercial policy, they must prepare to wind up their business. Having read the paragraph, the noble Lord proceeded: Having thus dealt with the Canadian question, I look to Germany—to the Zollverein—and I ask what prospect is there of our obtaining any beneficial return for the generosity with which we have opened our commercial arms to them. I look at the results of the Zollverein, which was established in 1836. I find that the net revenue from the tolls levied by the

Zollverein in 1834 amounted to 1,826,840*l*. In the year 1844 the revenue had grown to the sum of 3,781,710*l*. It had more than doubled in the course of ten years. These are the results, not of free trade, but of restricted trade. I have no doubt that hon. Gentlemen are well aware that the mode of distributing this revenue is according to the population in each country—that is to say, it is divided, as it were, by a poll tax upon the number of the inhabitants. The result is, that the revenue averaged 1*s*. 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ *d*. per head during the first period, whilst it had risen to 2*s*. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ *d*. per head during 1844. Now, I ask whether it is reasonable to expect, when the policy of the Zollverein has answered so admirably, that the people will consent to a reduction of the tariffs from which the taxes are levied in a way so satisfactory to themselves, especially when you have no longer anything to offer them in return. Had you retained your duties—had you said we will reduce our duties on corn, on timber, or on the hosiery of Saxony; if Saxony will allow our iron, our cutlery, our hardware, our cotton, or our woollen manufactures to be imported at low duties, then that would have been a reasonable ground why our duties should have been relaxed. But you have given them all they could ask. You have opened wide your markets to them, and have left them no more they can desire, while they are prepared to protect their manufactures; and by their protection they have nursed their manufactures almost into a rivalry with our own. Their policy is this—to take your yarns and your twists—your raw manufactured articles, and then to manufacture them into valuable goods. That is the policy which they have pursued. I find that in 1836 they imported 95 centners of iron—that is, 100 lbs. in weight; in 1841 they imported 98,600 centners; but they will take none of your cutlery or hardware. Of bars of iron, in 1836 they took 172 centners; which increased to 550,000 centners in 1844. I find that, in like manner, of raw yarn, in 1838, they took 363,000 centners; in 1841, they took 464,000 centners. I find that they spun at home altogether 561,000 centners of yarn, which, taking into account the difference in value between raw yarn and cotton, the average value of cotton being three or four times that of yarn, would amount to 12,000,000*l*. sterling. And to show how protection has succeeded in nursing their manufactures, I may state,

that in 1841 they exported no less than 87,000 centners of cotton hosiery goods. On these grounds, seeing no just reason to hope, in the present mode of proceeding, that you will induce foreign countries to take your manufactures—that by your course of free trade you will obtain reciprocity in return—on these grounds I have opposed the measures of Her Majesty's Ministers. I think that the result of these proceedings will be to give a benefit, a great benefit, to foreigners, and to inflict a corresponding injury upon ourselves. I wish, when the circumstances of this country will admit of a reduction of taxation, that you should reduce those taxes of which the entire benefit of the reduction would go into the pockets of the people of England. I wish to see those duties reduced—if you can afford to reduce duties—which bear upon the produce of those countries which will consent to take our manufactures in return. I wish to see duties reduced in favour of those countries with which you will have an opportunity of employing your own shipping, instead of reducing duties on the produce of those countries which have ships of their own in which to convey their produce; and, above all, I object to the policy which seems to be adopted by Her Majesty's Ministers, of dealing with nations as they deal with their Friends in this House, bearing hard on those which deal kindly with you, and of making concessions only to those who oppose you. I object to their policy, that it is based on the principle of making concessions to hostile rivals, to enemies, to those who are opposed to us and to our interests; and that it refuses concessions, and turns the cold shoulder to those countries which manifest towards us a friendly feeling; and on these grounds I move that the Report be taken into further consideration this day six months.

MR. LAWSON said, it was with great reluctance he had agreed to follow the noble Lord, *longe sed proximus intervallo*, in seconding his Motion; but he did so with the greatest sincerity, as the noble Lord's views were in accordance with the principles which he (Mr. Lawson) had entertained all his life, and particularly in 1842, when the amended Tariff was proposed. He had opposed that measure, and had he then been supported as he ought to have been, he would have pressed his Amendment to a division. However, he was glad now to find that after three years' experience of the policy of the right

hon. Baronet, his protectionist Friends agreed with him in their opinions of its injurious effects. The present dissensions in the party had been alluded to as if those who were called the country party were really acting against the principles which they had formerly supported. Now, to his certain knowledge, the opinions of his hon. Friends at that time were as much opposed to the free-trade system as they are now. The only reason why they then supported the right hon. Baronet was the expectation held out to them by the right hon. Baronet, that those concessions then made would avert the necessity of further innovation, and would afford a permanent settlement of the question of free trade. He would now refer to the measures immediately before the House. And, first, as respected manufactures: he had at several previous periods stated his objection to the lowering of duties which had been for some years levied on articles of foreign manufacture. The bad effect of reducing the duty had been strongly shown by a return moved for by the hon. Member for Warwickshire. From that return it was shown that by the relaxation of duty the imports of foreign boots and shoes had been doubled, and in some cases trebled, thus displacing the profit of trade and the wages of workmen to that amount. He was sorry that such an effect should take place under the sanction of the present Government. The next fact to which he was desirous of drawing attention was connected with the linen trade. He had stated before, that the home growth of flax was of essential service. Since he had made that statement, a Paper had been laid upon the Table of the House, fully supporting the doctrines of protection which he advocated. That Paper stated to the effect that it would not be too much to expect that a large increase of the linen trade would take place in Ireland—a trade that, properly fostered, might run parallel with the cotton manufactures of another part of the kingdom, with this difference to the advantage of the linen trade, that whereas the raw material in one case was brought from abroad, in the other it might all be produced in this country, and the whole return be expended in labour at home; as it stood, however, five or six millions were sent out of the country annually, to the benefit of foreigners, for the purchase of that which might be grown at home with profit to the farmer and advantage to the labourer. He would now advert to potatoes; and if the subject was

distasteful to the House, he hoped the House would recollect that the whole argument of the right hon. Baronet had once been based upon the failure of the potato crop, or the appearance, as it had been called, of the potato rot, or the potato famine. The right hon. Baronet had said, with respect to the failure of the potato, "wait till May." The House had now waited until May; and what did they hear? Why, that the right hon. Baronet, in a speech not long time since delivered, had said, that the loss of the potato crop was not the cause of the introduction of his free-trade measures. So these measures could now go unfettered to another House, stripped of all that maudlin sentimentality with which they had been invested by the alleged failure of the crop of potatoes. He could not avoid objecting to the use which had been made of the name of Providence, during the progress of the debates, ascribing to it the afflictive calamity which had been exaggerated for a party purpose. It has been even asserted by a noble Lord the Member for the West Riding, that "the stars in their courses fought for" free trade, thereby implying that Providence had been the author of evil, that presumed good might come—a doctrine abhorrent from just sentiments of a mild and benignant overruling Power. After the late favourable season, he would rather exclaim with the Roman historian, "*Benignitate Dei, et modestiâ hiemis rebus extremis subventum est.*" The assertion he had made on a previous occasion as to the great fluctuations in prices since the passing of the first free-trade measures in 1842, and as to the low price at which Yorkshire potatoes had been offered in vain for sale in London, were fully borne out by facts. In respect to foreign potatoes a duty had existed in 1842 that was nearly prohibitory—he believed it amounted to 2*l.* If they looked to the returns connected with that article, since 1842, they would find a fair specimen of what they might reasonably expect in case they should have a free trade in corn. He would ask the following questions: Had the price of potatoes been lowered since 1842? Had their law made them independent of seasons? Had it made them receive an ample foreign supply? And lastly, had the prices been steady? In respect to the last question, the returns which he held in his hand stated that the prices of potatoes had fluctuated in 1842, 1843, and 1844, from 40*s.* to 90*s.* And in the present season

the prices varied from 10s. to 150s. If that was so, what a contrast this afforded to the benefit of the sliding scale, under which prices had been perfectly steady, and the greatest variation had been only 33 per cent. As that statement had been cheered from the Treasury Bench, he would state now, when the greatest rise in potatoes took place, it was in December last. In December, 1843, the highest average of potatoes was 58s.; in 1844 the highest average was 58s.; and in December, 1845, the prices rose to 90s. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would cheer this. The moment that Peel's Tariff came out, from 90s. they went up to 150s. It appeared by the reports that up to the 1st January, 1846, the greatest increase in any article of export was in potatoes, the declared value having been before that 5,000*l.*, and for the year ending January, 1846, it was 23,000*l.* He presumed that 23,000*l.* would purchase 10,000 tons of potatoes. If that was the case, what became of the declaration of the Premier, that he could not find vessels to import 10,000 tons of potatoes? If there were vessels sufficient to export 10,000 tons of potatoes, there would certainly be vessels sufficient to import them. It had been said that potatoes were plentiful in Yorkshire, and he could quote from two respectable local journals, the *Leeds Mercury* and the *Leeds Intelligencer*, in corroboration of this. One paragraph which gave the information was headed "Important Fact." In this paragraph it was said that 600 bushels of potatoes were offering weekly at 2s. a bushel. They had also been sold at 5*d.* and 6*d.* per peck. A gentleman, an inhabitant of that county, had also told him that potatoes were 2s. a bushel in Yorkshire. He had also written to his man of business in Yorkshire upon this subject, and he had found that potatoes were selling near Ripon, from 20*d.* to 2s. and 2s. 4*d.* a bushel. At Knaresborough the price was 2s., though they were now becoming scarce for seed. The same person also said, that so large a quantity of potatoes had been set this year, that the produce would be extremely large, and the price low. He (Mr. Lawson) had also stated, that a cargo of potatoes had been brought up to London from Yorkshire, and could not be sold. He was now prepared to show that this was really the case. He held a letter in his hand, detailing all the circumstances. The potatoes came from Howden. They were in quantity fifty tons, had cost 88s.

a ton, and, after being dressed for the London market, they probably cost 96s. per ton. The cargo was kept in London six weeks, and could not be sold even at 50s. per ton. This very cargo was now at Selby, on its way to Leeds. [Sir R. PEEL : Was the cargo good?] Yes. He feared that if the measures of the right hon. Baronet passed, which he trusted they would not, corn would get into the hands of factors, as potatoes had done. He would now refer to the progress of the measure in another place. After the arguments which had been addressed to the fears of the Members of another House, he should say, that if any one of these noble persons possessed the spirit of their ancestors, they would not yield that to clamour which they have refused to argument. If, however, any of the aristocracy should truckle to any Government in power, and should betray that want of moral courage and fortitude the presence of which, in his opinion, was one of the highest ornaments of those who were of the highest birth in this country, then he would say—

"What will ennoble sots, or slaves, or cowards?
Alas! not all the blood of all the Howards."

Although in one instance it had been attempted to reanimate that blood by an infusion of curry-powder, he thought the blood of the Howards would fail in gaining the respect of the country if they were found truckling or subservient to Ministers. He trusted, however, that there was not the slightest chance of the passing of this measure, which, in his opinion, would be as destructive of individual interests as it would be productive of national degradation.

ALDERMAN HUMPHREY said, the hon. Member must have been woefully deceived to suppose that potatoes bought in Yorkshire at 88s. a ton, and raised by other charges to 95s., could be sent to London, kept for six weeks, and then offered at 50s. a ton. It so happened that from 20,000 to 30,000 tons of potatoes passed over his wharf annually; and therefore he must know something of the matter. He did not believe that at any time there had been potatoes at 50s. a ton, except in a very abundant season, when they had been sold for the cows. This year potatoes had come to London from Yorkshire and Scotland; and in the result they had been found to be very bad, many cargoes having been thrown overboard because they had been spoiled. At the present moment, and he believed through the whole winter,

potatoes grown in Yorkshire, and known as the Scotch reds, had fetched 5*l.* to 6*l.* per ton at the water side; in fact, they had been dearer this year than any year within his recollection. No potatoes had been sold of the quality spoken of by the hon. Member, the Yorkshire reds, under 4*l.*, and even these were not of first-rate quality. If the hon. Member would only let him look at those letters, he should be able to prove that it was a perfect hoax from first to last. He should think that the potatoes must have been rotten; and it being found that there was no chance of their being sold they were taken back. [Mr. LAWSON handed the letter to the worthy Alderman.] The potatoes must of necessity have been in a state of decomposition; and the only way in which he could explain the case was by supposing that the owner of the ship was determined to get his freight for them, and not being able to get it in London took them back to Yorkshire.

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER did not wish to prolong the discussion on the subject of which his hon. Friend had spoken. He had heard his hon. Friend's statement with very considerable surprise, for he could not, any more than the worthy Alderman opposite, account for a Yorkshireman having resorted to so singular an expedient with his potatoes, unless he were to suppose it possible that they might have been intended as a screen for the conveyance of some smuggled article, a circumstance which would take away any wish he might have to examine his hon. Friend's correspondence. The observations of the noble Lord the Member for Lynn appeared to him to be directed to two points: one was, a general objection entertained by the noble Lord to the removal of customs duties as compared with excise duties; the other referred to the inexpediency of making any reduction of duty on articles introduced from countries which did not give us a corresponding advantage. In dealing with the financial part of the question, the noble Lord, he must say, did lay down some principles of finance which at least had the merit of being entirely new, but were of such a character that he thought there was no chance of seeing them carried into effect by any persons who might be responsible for the conduct of the public finances, unless, indeed, the noble Lord himself should be in a situation to induce the House to accede to principles as novel as those which he had announced. He must say,

also, that the noble Lord had stated some principles applying to trade not less extraordinary than those he had recommended the House to adopt with respect to finance. But there was one consolation to those who had heard the noble Lord—the one part of his speech was an effectual answer to the other; so that those who heard the noble Lord had the advantage at once of hearing his objections, and of hearing them completely answered. The noble Lord laid it down as a general principle that excise duties ought to be repealed; that by the total repeal you offer a great relief to persons dealing in excisable articles, and get rid of the establishments employed in their collection. He gave the noble Lord the benefit of the whole of that argument; he admitted that if you could repeal all the excise duties you would both give great relief to the consumers, and get rid of establishments which must be maintained so long as you retain any part of the duties. But when the noble Lord proposed to raise the whole revenue by an augmentation of the customs duties commensurate with the reduction in the excise, he attempted a system of revenue which could not be carried into effect with advantage to this country. If there were arguments in favour of customs duties on particular articles, parallel arguments might be adduced with respect to excise duties on certain articles, or with respect to other taxes, which might, nevertheless, operate unfavourably on particular classes of persons. The adoption of one or other class of duties was, after all, a mere question of apportioning an inconvenient burden in the manner least obstructive to the progress of trade, and least prejudicial to the general interests of the community. If we, having a large revenue to maintain, took on ourselves to repeal the greater portion of the excise duties, the necessary consequence would be the imposition on the foreign trade of this country of a greater burden, which would injuriously interfere with its progress, and would lay an unfair burden on persons consuming articles of general use imported into this country. Balancing the inconveniences and benefits which would result to the trade of this country, he believed the system of the noble Lord would be prejudicial. The noble Lord gave a statement of particular articles, the duties on which he thought it would be advisable to repeal, beginning with soap, the duty on which he described as being so heavy as to prevent the consumption of the article among

the body of the community. He (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) had never disputed that the repeal of the soap duty—provided the revenue would bear it—would be a great advantage to the community; nor had he denied that the removal of a portion of the same duty some years ago did produce great benefit. But let him remind the noble Lord that the price paid for soap by the community generally, had hitherto been compounded of several elements—partly of the duties levied on imported commodities of which the soap was made, and partly of the excise duty on the manufactured article itself. If they had not repealed the excise duty, and given relief to the consumer by that reduction, they had at least given the public this advantage—the duty on the tallow of which the soap was made had been reduced one-half, that on the oil of which the soap was made had been reduced. [“Hear.”] Ay, but give him leave to say these were the modes in which the industry of the country had been stimulated, and foreign trade encouraged; and they had conferred advantages more than equal to those which would have been derived if a corresponding reduction in the excise duty on the manufactured article had been made. Considering these things, he did not hesitate to say that the public had benefited more by a reduction of duties on the articles of which the soap was made, than they would have done by the repeal of an equal amount of the excise duty. The tax imposed on the raw material of manufacture necessarily enhanced the price of the manufactured article beyond the amount of the tax; whereas the excise duty being levied on the last stage of the manufacture, and credit being allowed for the duty for a considerable period, the manufacturer had an advantage, and was enabled to impose no greater burden on the public than the amount actually paid into the Exchequer. He did not mean to undervalue the benefits that would result to trade from a revision of the excise laws; he was only setting off against the inconvenience of the excise laws, the inconvenience of exorbitant customs duties. In a period of general peace, when trade must be encouraged, and the amount of benefit to the community in general must depend on the extent to which it was encouraged, he did not think it would be wise to depart from the principle hitherto followed in England of dividing the duties levied on articles between the customs and excise. In another part of his speech, the noble Lord paid a

tribute, in which every man must concur, to the merits of former finance Ministers—Pitt, Canning, and Huskisson. But did the noble Lord ever hear from them that it was advisable to transfer a larger portion of the revenue from the excise to the customs? Quite the contrary. The wisest course appeared to him to be to divide between the two branches such remissions of taxation as could be afforded. It was impossible to deny that such a course had hitherto been advantageous to the revenue, and had more than answered the expectations that had been formed of it. With respect to the duty on malt, the noble Lord had estimated it at five millions, and acknowledged the difficulty of replacing that amount of revenue, but recommended the reimposition of duty on beer. That any one professing the horror of the excise which the noble Lord had expressed should propose such a course, appeared a most extraordinary financial proceeding. How would it operate? Either the excise officer must be introduced into every dwelling where beer was brewed, or only into the public breweries and places where beer was sold. It had been an object with benevolent persons to encourage homebrewing by small farmers and the poorer classes, and such a course had been deemed beneficial to the agricultural interest. But if the tax on beer was to be general, every cottage and farm must be brought under the control of the excise officer. But if the visits of the excise were to be confined to the public breweries, upon whom was the tax imposed? Upon the lower classes, who bought their beer; while those who had the means of brewing for themselves would be exempt. He had been instrumental in removing this duty; and he should indeed regret if the House were induced by the arguments of the noble Lord to reimpose it. Certainly, to collect the malt duty there must be a supervision of the parties who were to pay it, and that supervision did interfere in some measure with the trade. But weigh that inconvenience against the consequences that flowed from the beer duty, and every one who had paid any attention to the subject would agree that the malt duty was more equitable in its operation, and less liable to abuse than the excise on beer. The noble Lord had thought proper to be joocular upon the report of a gentleman who had taken the trouble to conduct some experiments upon the fattening properties of malt, and had complained of the

process not having been intrusted to a gentleman conversant with agriculture; but why the experiments of weighing the food and weighing the cattle, and observing the results, should not have been conducted by the gentleman who had so kindly undertaken the task, could not well be conceived. The result of those experiments had been long known, and he had not yet heard of any agricultural gentleman having undertaken experiments to show that the result was erroneous; and until some experiments had been made with equal accuracy to those the report of which had been laid on the Table, the noble Lord would excuse him if he were a little incredulous upon the objections which the noble Lord had raised to the latter. With respect to hops, the grower had had the monopoly of the market; the foreign grower was subject to duty on his hops when imported, and it did not appear to him to be one of the articles calling now for a removal of the duty. Then with regard to the 400 per cent. on spirits, Parliament and finance Ministers had agreed that spirit was an article which should be subject to the highest duty of which it was susceptible; and if it were so subjected, it was satisfactory to know that in this country at least the duty was not beyond what the article would bear without creating illicit manufacture. He did not know, when the noble Lord proposed the reduction of the duty on home spirits, whether he intended to retain the duty on the foreign article, and thus produce the evils which would proceed from a low price of the former, while the latter would practically be excluded from the market. The noble Lord referred to the objection he had formerly made to the reduction of the duty on timber. The noble Lord made the most extraordinary financial proposition on this point that he had ever heard. The noble Lord admitted distinctly that there had been a great increase in the timber trade since the period when the duty was reduced. But he said, "See what a benefit the revenue would have derived if you had not altered the duty; in the year 1841 the timber introduced was only 500,000 loads, whilst in 1845 it was above 1,000,000 loads; and if you had retained the old duty of 55s., instead of 25s., you would have made 1,500,000*l.* of additional timber duty;" forgetting, most unaccountably, that the large increase of importation was the result of the reduction of the duty. And the noble Lord said

the consumer had not got the whole of the benefit of the reduced duty, because part of it had gone into the pocket of the grower in Denmark. He was willing to admit that with respect to the last year; in the preceding year the consumer got the whole benefit of the reduction of duty. In the latter year there had been an increased demand for timber, and the demand having been greater than the supply, there had been a rise in price. But would not that have been equally the case if the theory of the noble Lord was correct according to his doctrine? If the duty had not been reduced there would have been the same demand on the foreign grower, and the same advantage would have been derived by him in a pecuniary point of view. But there was one great error running through the whole of the noble Lord's calculations. The noble Lord supposed that in matters of trade the necessary advantage of one country was the disadvantage of another; and he could not understand how in matters of trade the advantages were mutual. In ordinary life, it frequently happened that the prosperity of one man depended on that of his neighbour. With respect to trade, he was confident that was the case; and he did not admit that because the Northern Powers might have profited by the reduction of duty and the increased introduction of the articles of their produce, that this country had therefore suffered, or had not been equally benefited. How did the noble Lord show that this country had not been benefited? The noble Lord said, "You have not exported to Prussia or Russia a quantity of cotton corresponding with the amount of timber you have received." But that was no proof that this country was a loser by the trade. If cotton had not been sent, how did it get paid for? If they looked at the general mass of manufactures sent to foreign nations, they would observe in that mass that although Russia or Prussia refused to receive some goods direct from this country, they did receive the value of those articles which were sent to other countries; and the only effect was that instead of Prussia or Russia taking them directly, they were sent to a distant country, and exchanged for other commodities which suited Russia and Prussia. Then as to the remarks of the noble Lord with respect to shipping. If the shipping of Prussia had increased, the shipping of England had increased also, having more than doubled since the year

1822. We ought rather to look with thankfulness on the increase of our own resources, than with jealousy on the increase of the commerce of other countries. The noble Lord had adverted to the situation of Canada, and intimated that the measures which had been recommended to the House were calculated to damp the loyalty of that portion of Her Majesty's subjects, and lead them to encourage the prospect of separation. He had this day laid on the Table the despatches which had been moved for a few nights ago. And what was the result? It was said, at an early period of the discussion, that there would be a great outcry in Canada for a reduction of the duties on timber; that the reduction would annihilate the produce, and create universal dissatisfaction. But what was the prayer of the Legislative Assembly in their recorded address to this country? Did they object to this reduction of the timber duties as a matter likely to affect their interests, and alienate their affections from this country? Not at all. They did not say one syllable on the subject of the timber duties; they prayed only that instead of levying a duty of 1s. on corn, the duty might be 1d. It had been said that the House of Assembly in Canada had opposed the measures of the Government, and carried an adjournment against the Government by a majority of seven. Now, what was the fact? The instructions given on the subject of the 3s. duty on the import of corn was this—that the Colony should be at liberty to pursue the course they might think most conducive to their own colonial interest; and the representative of the Government in the House suggested the repeal of that duty. A proposition was made to adjourn the debate, and that adjournment was carried by a majority of seven; but on a subsequent and no distant day a reduction of 3s. was proposed, and, so far from the Government being in a minority, there were two divisions, in one of which there was a majority of sixteen, and in the other a majority of twenty. The noble Lord had mistaken the point on which the debate arose. The United States had completed a canal to Lake Erie, by means of which the produce of Western Canada could be taken to New York, and Canada be supplied by articles from thence by that canal; this measure had been favoured by the United States Government. The parties who were debating the question in Canada

said they had spent 1,500,000*l.* in completing the water communication by means of the St. Lawrence and the canals attached to it, and if the American Government conveyed that produce to New York, the canals would be useless; they must, therefore, exert themselves to bring the trade down their own canals. That was the object to which the attention of the House of Assembly was directed. There could be no doubt that Canada had derived a great and permanent advantage from her connexion with this country. Her trade had been extended—her capital increased—her improvement promoted—and if the sense of the province could be taken, man by man, as to the improvement of her situation by a connexion with the United States, he believed the party in favour of such a connexion would be small indeed. The great principle laid down by the noble Lord was this, that where a foreign country imposes a duty on our commodities, we are bound to impose a similar duty on the commodities of that country: he recommended a perpetual war of tariffs between countries. To a course of this kind he (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) entertained the most decided objection. It was the duty of every nation to do all in her power to promote the continuance of peace, and the blessings which peace bestowed. By hostile tariffs, a state of complaint, dissatisfaction, and jealousy, was begotten; which, however dexterously it might be softened for a time, must, in the end, give rise to animosity and a dissolution of the ties of amity and friendship. History showed that some of the most disastrous wars had arisen upon commercial subjects—the imposition of duties, and the contests for monopoly—such as the noble Lord recommended. In such a course he could not acquiesce; he protested against the doctrines the noble Lord had laid down; and so far from sharing in the apprehensions he had expressed regarding the present Bill, he recommended it to the House as a measure calculated not only to produce the best financial results, but to promote amity and friendship with the nations with which our trade was carried on.

Mr. BANKES complained that the right hon. Gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer had misrepresented the noble Lord the Member for Lynn, into whose mouth he first put a speech which that noble Lord had never delivered, and then addressed himself to the task of replying to it. The right hon. Gentleman would appear to have

misconceived and misunderstood every proposition the noble Lord had submitted. But the protectionist party, sitting where they were, were placed in an unfortunate position for opposition, for they could reach but one ear of the Minister, and, as had been facetiously remarked, that ear was stuffed with cotton. The noble Lord had never, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer seemed to suppose, made any such proposition as that all excise duties should be abolished, and that the revenue should be derived from the customs alone. He had objected to the mode in which the customs were sought to be treated by this Bill; and he had called upon the Government, before they proceeded to show favour to countries which maintained hostile tariffs, to consider whether a better mode of lightening the burdens on this country, and of supplying the necessary wants of our people at a cheap rate, might not be obtained by lowering some of the excise duties. The better and wiser course surely would be to keep up some customs duties, for the purpose of commercial dealing, if for no other reason, and in order that when we came to negotiate on mercantile matters with other nations we might have something in our hands wherewith to barter and make an interchange. This doctrine had been advocated by Mr. Huskisson. The noble Lord had urged it upon the consideration of the Ministers; but the Chancellor of the Exchequer had not considered it worth his while to devote one thought or one observation to it. The right hon. Gentleman had also treated hops very cavalierly. He had in general terms denied the statement of the noble Lord the Member for Lynn; but he had not dislodged him from his position, nor adduced a single reason for disputing the benefit which was sure to result to all classes from the reduction of the duty on hops. He (Mr. Banks) opposed the reception of the report on this Bill, because he felt convinced that the alterations and modifications which the measure proposed, would prove injurious in a very fatal degree to the interests of the operative classes in this country. He had received authentic intelligence from Manchester, which went to show that the reductions of duty which had been already adopted under the resolutions of that House, had tended to the disadvantage and injury of the working man. A reduction of twopence or threepence a gross had been made in silk handkerchiefs, and it had already led to a reduction of 2s. a week, or there-

abouts, in the wages of the operative. Again, in the article of that description of silk used in parasols, a reduction of a half-penny a yard had taken place, which had caused a diminution in the wages of the operative of 2½d. a day—that was to say, 15d. a week, or 60s. per annum. These were but small matters to be sure, but they showed what the general effect of the measure would be. With respect to Canada and the disfavour with which the Canadians viewed these proceedings of the Ministers, he must say he had heard nothing on the subject to contradict or disprove the statements made by the noble Lord the Member for Lynn. No demonstration whatever of approval of the Ministers' policy had been made by the Assembly of Canada. The fact was, that a solemn silence appeared to reign through that Assembly, whose members, he verily believed, were full of amazement and discontent at the measures proposed to be adopted in the mother country. Reference had been made in the course of that debate to the price of potatoes in England. He had always inclined to the belief that much unwarrantable alarm had existed on this subject; and he had made inquiries, the result of which justified this impression. He had recently received a letter from a respectable party in Nottingham, who stated that, allured by the representations of coming scarcity in this article of provision which had been made in that House, especially by Ministers, he had been induced to purchase 450 sacks, which he supposed would prove a very profitable speculation; but this anticipation had been completely frustrated; and he found that so far from being a gainer, he would be a loser by the transaction to the amount of 40l., for he found it impossible to get more than 4d. a stone for the best kidney potatoes. This did not look very like scarcity. Statements received from Ireland showed that in very many districts of that country the price was not unreasonably high, and that there was then even an inclination to fall. It appeared to be the unhappy destiny of the Ministers "to see the right, and yet pursue the wrong." The right hon. Baronet the Home Secretary had declared his conviction that the quantity of corn which had accumulated in bond in January last might have been then liberated with great benefit to the consumer, and without injury to the producer. Why, then, had it not been liberated? The Ministry had the power to do so in their

own hands. They thought, too, that it would have been proper to have called Parliament together in November last; but they had neglected to do so. They had a strong conviction that it would have been a wise proceeding to have opened the ports; but this too they had neglected to do. And yet they were in a position to have done all these things, for it appeared that the protectionist party would have been unable to control them, however desirous they might be of doing so. Let not that party, therefore, be blamed if evil arose, as it would unquestionably arise, from the sudden influx of an enormous inundation of grain. The hon. Member concluded by expressing his determination to oppose in all their stages the measures of the Government, which he said were viewed with dislike and distrust out of doors. The Ministry might rest assured that there was throughout the country, even in the manufacturing and commercial classes, distaste for the measures of the Government, and a doubt as to their policy.

Mr. HAWES was not prepared on that occasion to follow the hon. Member who had just spoken into a new discussion on the Corn Bill; neither was he prepared to go into the question as to whether they ought to repeal the excise duties, and impose other duties in lieu of them; but he did wish to call the attention of the noble Lord the Member for Lynn to one circumstance. In answer to the hon. Member who had just spoken, he would ask if there were such a distaste of this measure throughout the country as the hon. Member asserted there was, how did it happen that, affecting as the measure did (he meant the Customs duties measure then before them) so materially the commercial and manufacturing interests of the country, no one connected with the commercial or manufacturing interests had risen to support the views of the noble Lord? He inferred from that circumstance, that the mercantile interest did not regard the measure with distaste; but that, on the contrary, they believed it calculated to promote the general trade and the general interest of the country. He might add, that so far as his own experience went, the measure was highly acceptable to the country, and that the only thing unacceptable about it was the delay which it had encountered in that House. The evil effects of that delay could not be overrated. It was all very well to say, that in consequence of the Treasury Order the articles included in the Bill were practically

free of duty; but when it was remembered that the parties who gave the bond required by the Treasury were still responsible for the duties, and when the House considered the number of transactions that were daily taking place in reference to those articles, he thought it would appreciate the uneasiness these parties felt when they believed that it was just possible the measure might not pass. Mr. Pitt had been claimed by the noble Lord the Member for Lynn as a friend to protection; but he would mention a circumstance which would show the House whether Mr. Pitt's policy were really in favour of protection or of free trade. Soon after the American war of independence Mr. Pitt introduced a Bill into that House to put the trade of America on the footing of the coasting trade of this country. The Bill, he was sorry to say, was opposed by the liberal party of that day, and lost; but, had it passed, we should long ago have had that state of free trade and free intercourse with America which we were only now struggling to obtain. Mr. Pitt's authority, then, so far as it was worth anything, was decidedly in favour of free trade. In conclusion, he begged to impress upon the House the importance of allowing this measure to pass as rapidly as possible.

Mr. BORTHWICK said, the hon. Member observed that the manufacturing and commercial interests were not represented by any opposition in the House to the proposed measures. Need he remind the hon. Member for Lambeth that the place which the noble Lord (Lord G. Bentinck) near him represented was a commercial town. The noble Lord did not represent an agricultural constituency. But he would venture to say, that the Parliamentary history of this country had shown in neither House of the Legislature an hon. Member who had proved himself so worthy the gratitude and respect of the labouring classes of his fellow countrymen—a gratitude and respect which were freely recognised, as the noble Lord the Member for Lynn. And whether the noble Lord pressed his Motion to a division or not, it must be admitted that the principles upon which it was framed were broad, comprehensive, intelligible, and just. He contended that the principles upon which the present Bill was framed, of buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market, however they were applicable to private individuals, were not at all applicable so far as nations were concerned, in which a great variety of im-

portant interests were to be consulted. It was the duty of every nation to protect its own productions and industry from foreign competition; and he maintained that to compel the highly taxed agriculturist of this country to enter into an unfair competition with the cheap labour of other countries, was an injustice which could not be defended. It was to relieve his countrymen from this grievous wrong that the noble Lord the Member for Lynn was directing his efforts. Whether the noble Lord the Member for Lynn divided the House or not, the labouring industry of this country would be his debtor to a very large extent for the stand which he had made in their behalf.

M^r. PLUMPTRE, advertng to the charge which had been made against the protectionist party, of having delayed the measures of the Government, said that they were called upon to break down a system under which this country had long flourished; and if, therefore, instead of a few weeks, Parliament had been for the whole Session—nay, for the whole seven years of its duration, employed in discussing the measure, he would have been ready to pronounce the consumption of their time perfectly justifiable. The question was, whether they would sanction a system by which the commerce of this country would be ruined? One of his chief motives for addressing the House was in order to correct a misrepresentation connected with the produce of the county which he had the honour to represent. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, alluding to the subject of hops, said that the home producer would be placed by the Bill in a more favourable position than the foreign grower. He had had an opportunity of looking into the subject, particularly as connected with tithes. He found that in one parish the ordinary charge in lieu of tithes was 15*s.* per acre, and the extraordinary charge 12*s.*—making together 27*s.* per acre. He found also that in a neighbouring parish the ordinary charge was 14*s.* 6*d.*, and the extraordinary 12*s.* He had also received, in answer to a letter addressed by him to one of the largest growers of hops near Canterbury, a reply stating that for the best soils the ordinary charge was 12*s.*, and the extraordinary charge 14*s.* per acre; and in the inferior soils the ordinary charge 9*s.* or 10*s.*, and the extraordinary charge from 10*s.* to 12*s.* The tithes were equivalent to a charge of 5*s.* per cwt. on hops, which, with other

charges, amounted to nearly 20*s.* of certain payments, exclusive of poor rates and other local and indirect taxes, to none of which the foreigner was subject, but which the farmer must pay whether he sold his hops or not. The foreigner ought not to be allowed to import hops without paying a sum equal to these charges. The writer, moreover, stated his conviction that the effect of this measure would be to throw out of plant the culture of many acres in East Kent, the best part of the county for hop growing.

DR. BOWRING said, it had been to him a source of the greatest gratification that the failure of the many attempts which had been made to coerce foreign Governments by a system of restrictions, menaces, and reprisals, had been succeeded by a wiser policy—that of conciliation and free trade. It was far better to welcome foreigners to our ports by inviting imports than to alienate and repel them by hostile tariffs. The policy of peace was sure in the long run to be successful—and to be permanently and advantageously triumphant. The sagacious and amicable legislation of the present Government had already made its way to the friendly co-operation of many countries, and it would ere long influence all. If we welcomed imports we should force exports; if we bought from foreigners they would be compelled to buy of us. We should create advocates and allies in the countries where now we had only opponents and rivals. We should teach lessons that would everywhere be learned. Our reforms would reform the world. It was gratifying to look round and watch the effect—the already visible effect of the measures of the Ministry. They had found a response more or less audible in every part of the civilized world. That selfish policy which had been supposed to be the groundwork of the whole of our commercial system, was felt to be no longer reconcilable with the well-being—with the prosperity—with the augmented wealth of other nations. He had had the satisfaction of receiving from every quarter of the compass testimonials to the popularity of the right hon. Baronet. It was at last seen that we were giving practical assent to the lessons of political economy, which we had been accused of being willing to teach others, but which we neglected or refused to apply to ourselves. He would ask leave to read to the House a passage from an interesting and eloquent letter he had that day received from Elihu Burritt,

than whom no man had been more instrumental in encouraging and strengthening the pacific spirit—the cultivation of friendly relations between his country and ours:—

“When (he says) free trade shall be ushered in to sweep from the face of the earth the mountainous ranges of prejudice and nationality, which have made enemies of nations, there will be no questions of disputed territories to embitter them, no narrow-minded policy to feed international jealousy, or dam the currents of fraternal and commercial intercourse. The smallest nation may then say—the whole boundless earth is ours, where we may buy, sell, and trade in the commerce of good-will, without any to molest or make us afraid. If by free trade, England should lose Oregon, and even Canada, she would gain in the United States what would be worth to her a dozen of either of those countries. For one, I regard free trade as the commercial harbinger of the millennium which shall beat all swords into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks. Even in anticipation of the partial triumph of this gospel economy, in the opening of your ports to corn, and other productions of our great West, the warlike people of that region are even now fulfilling that blessed prophecy in a degree—they are breaking their swords into ploughshares, and driving those ploughshares deep into their Eden soil, inspired with the hope of feeding the British. I devoutly hope that the coming seed time, in that vast region of unequalled fertility, will be a better seed time of feelings towards Great Britain. I cannot find words to express my sense of the importance to humanity at large, of annexing that rich universe of land to your crowded shores, by opening your ports to its produce. The moral influence of such a measure on the labouring people of both countries cannot be meted out in words: there are thousands and thousands in that region of our country, living in the rudest state of civilization with regard to every article of furniture, dress, and the other comforts and elegancies known to a cultivated society, while at the same time they are surrounded with breastworks of golden corn and wheat. On the other hand, are there not thousands and thousands of ill-fed labourers in your country, pining amid fabrics that would adorn princes—articles of clothing and comfort, which, if exchanged for food, would fill our great West with the paradise of comfortable homes, transformed from the floorless log cabins of Western wheat-growers? What an effect it would have on the morals of your manufacturing population, if the fountains of American food should be broken up to feed them from our granaries!”

The noble Lord (Lord G. Bentinck) had represented the project of free-trade principles as likely to alienate the Canadian provinces. But they knew their interests far better, and began to feel that emancipation from all commercial fetters was calculated far more to serve them than any restriction upon their trade. Had he read the proceedings of the public meeting at Montreal, held so lately as the 9th of last month? Many resolutions were vehemently debated—some were rejected; but what

was the resolution passed by an overwhelming majority? It was this:—

“Moved by Mr. Glass, seconded by Mr. Holton—That, in order to render the application of free-trade principles thoroughly effectual, it is necessary to embrace them in all their comprehensiveness in this Colony; that protection and regulation in every form should be repudiated, and the commerce of the Colony approximated as nearly to perfect freedom as the exigencies of the public revenue will permit.”

Could the friends of free trade desire a stronger testimony? Could the principles of free trade be more clearly laid down and recognised? No! And we were willing, while we claimed for ourselves the right to buy in the cheapest, and to sell in the dearest market, to allow the same privilege to our fellow countrymen, wherever they were placed. Recognising no monopolies—repudiating all differential duties—we wished not to impose monopolies on others, or to require preferences for ourselves or our Colonies. We enact no reservations. We demanded freedom, absolute freedom, for labour and capital. The good work was everywhere progressing. France, so long the model of all that is narrow and restrictive—France, that had carried the doctrines of self-dependence, and abhorrence of free-trade principles, to the extreme—was already beginning to feel the absurdity of her legislation, and to agitate for its change. The Vine-growers' Committee of the south were again in a state of active exertion. Paris was creating a League for the emancipation of commerce, whose influence was already making its way to the Chambers. The Tariff which we were now discussing answered, and answered most emphatically, those who told us that before administering to others, we should heal our own diseases. That is our immediate mission—that is our present occupation. We are giving the best evidence of the sincerity of our purposes. We leave the reform of the faults of other nations, not to our representatives, not to our negotiations, but to a sense of the interests of those whom hostile tariffs were intended to delude and to pillage. The deluded and the pillaged consumer will awake, ere long, to recognise how much he has been betrayed; and there is no country where the awakening will be more complete than in France. In Germany the reaction has already begun. The legislation upon which we were entering has already enabled Prussia to resist the demands for increased duties upon British manufactures, which

has come from the Southern States of the Zollverein. The doctrines of List—one of the most mischievous and untrustworthy of men—are beginning to be exploded, though an immense circulation had been given to them by the manufacturers of Germany. Under the names of patriotism and nationality, the German people have been cozened into a system which, after all, is but a robbery on a large scale, disguised under false names. No doubt the earlier adoption of free-trade principles would have prevented much of the absurd and hostile legislation of the Zollverein. If the act done cannot be repaired, at all events its progress will be arrested now. Italy is also moving in the right direction; the kingdom of the Two Sicilies, after having been long the victim of the protective system, to use the words of a high authority whose report he (Dr. Bowring) was now reading, is already entering upon commercial treaties with France, England, Austria, Sardinia, and other States, and, encouraged by the results of liberal legislation, is moving boldly forward in that direction. The papal Government, which has pushed protection and prohibition to their very extremes, has at last acknowledged that these are "economical heresies," under whose influence its commerce has perished; its manufactures have not prospered, and the steps it has taken in the way of liberal commercial legislation have already been rewarded by an increase of revenue, and an obvious augmentation of the public prosperity. The Sardinian Government is also making progress. It cherished with pertinacity the protective system; but that system failed. Modifications have been introduced, and one has been the parent of another. Every tendency towards commercial liberty has been fruitful of good—has strengthened the desire for more facilities to trade—for a wider field of intercourse—and, to use the words of an Italian writer in an essay which has just appeared at Turin—

"The time is now matured for important commercial changes; Sir Robert Peel will succeed. The first nation in the world must act upon all others; and her policy, which is already bringing the various Italian Governments into co-operation, will, through the numerous channels of her political and social influences—by successful modifications of hostile tariffs—create a general tendency towards, and prepare a not distant triumph for, the universal emancipation of the world."

Even in Spain a ray of hope is visible. The Report of our Import Duties Committee has been translated into Spanish. The

proceedings of the League have there attracted much attention. The newspapers are beginning to enlighten the Spanish mind on these important questions. In a word, whichever way we look, the signs of the times are encouraging. The right hon. Baronet (Sir R. Peel) has found much to invite him forward; and while so proceeding forward, to remove every impediment, every difficulty in the way of the freest intercourse, he will be hailed, in proportion to his merits, as the benefactor of his country and of mankind.

COLONEL SIBTHORP thought that the House was fully entitled to the foreign experience of the hon. and learned Member who had just sat down, seeing that he had been paid 13,500*l.* for his services on various roving commissions. The hon. and learned Member had called the right hon. Baronet the most popular man in Europe: the Lord deliver him from such popularity! Perhaps if the right hon. Baronet would again avail himself of the hon. and learned Member's services, the latter would consider him the most popular man in England. The hon. and learned Gentleman's language was, "Give us the friendship of France, Tuscany, Spain, and Italy, and we should care nothing about our own people." The hon. and learned Gentleman was so enamoured with the conduct of the right hon. Baronet, that he had better at once come over to the Ministerial side of the House. Whatever might be the immediate result of the Government measure in the end, he was sure in the end the truth would prevail, and the country would know who were their friends. The right hon. Baronet would have cause, ere long, to repent of the course he had adopted. All he would say was, that if he wanted to find an instance of apostasy, hypocrisy, and perfidy, he would point out the right hon. Baronet. He should, from a sense of duty, support the Amendment of the noble Lord.

MR. HENLEY censured the conduct of the Government in repealing taxes in deference to agitation. It was only those who made a noise about a tax who got it repealed. Turnpike-gates were not suppressed in Wales till Rebecca came; the gentlemen of the League had kicked up a row, and had got their object. The agriculturists wished for the repeal of the malt tax; but they repressed agitation instead of encouraging it, and, consequently, got no relief. This was not treating the agriculturists quite fairly. He would not

enter into the great question whether customs or excise duties ought to be taken off; but when the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that they ought to be taken off equally, he begged to say that was not the course pursued; a much larger amount of customs than excise duties had always been removed: if excise duties were taken off, they must do away with a great deal of patronage; but by repealing customs duties they were always told that not a single custom-house officer less would be required, and that was the reason why the latter duties were taken off, and not the former. To all Governments it was as natural as eating their breakfast to keep up patronage—it was a part of the system and mystery of government. He did not impute it in particular to the present Government; it was common to all Governments. There was another matter at which he could not help looking with apprehension. At present the taxation of this country was spread over a vast surface: they had learnt by experience that indirect taxation had run its limits, and they had had some experience also that direct taxation was in nearly the same state; the Property Tax was not now nearly so productive as at first; but it was evidently the intention of the Government to reduce the revenue to as few heads as possible, and he did not deny that some expense of collection might thereby be saved; but he recollected the agitation against the Income Tax, then producing 1,000,000*l.* The Minister said that he could not do without it; but the people would not pay it, and the Minister did without it. Now, when the mass of the revenue was collected from a few heads of taxation only, they might have a run against one of those heads, and some fine morning suddenly find themselves short of the money to pay the national creditors. The hon. and learned Doctor (Bowring) had said that the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government was the most popular man in Europe; it was possible that his present measures tended to make him so, as they were more calculated to benefit foreigners than Englishmen; but, for his own part, he should prefer that the right hon. Baronet was the most popular man in England.

Mr. HUDSON, in addressing a few words on the subject of this measure, said, in reference to the silk question, that the mere consumption of a greater amount of the raw material was not the proper test of the state of those employed in that manu-

facture; but that the real test was, whether those employed were better paid for their labour. He contended that they were worse paid than previously. Again, in regard to what the Government was doing with timber, it would have been preferable to have reduced the excise duty on bricks; for, in the one case, the advantage went into the pockets of the foreigner, whilst, in the latter case, the benefit would be on the side of their own countrymen. He and his Friends around him objected to these measures of the Government because they were of an un-English character. They put, too, 10, and, in some instances, 15 per cent. of protection on manufactures, whilst they deprived the land of all protection by their Corn Law Repeal Bill—at least, within a very short period; and, though he might be met with the argument that this was a question of revenue, he could not see why the revenue argument should not be equally applied to the produce of the land as well as of manufactures. With these views, if the noble Lord pressed his Amendment, he would divide with him against a measure which he considered was unjust, unwise, impolitic, and dangerous.

Amendment of Lord George Bentinck, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made by the Committee read a second time.

Bill ordered to be read a third time.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Tuesday, May 19, 1846.

CUSTOMS DUTIES BILL.

The DUKE of BUCCLEUCH moved that the Bill be read 1^a.

The LORD CHANCELLOR then put the question, when

The DUKE of RICHMOND said, he could not allow this Bill to pass—to be read a first time—without expressing his opinion that this measure was positively adding insult to injury. Their Lordships were now called upon to consider two Bills for depriving the agricultural interest of protection; and if they looked at the Votes of the House of Commons, they would find that those measures, which were called remedial measures, and which were introduced simultaneously with the Corn Bill, but from which he did not anticipate much benefit, had made very little progress. He thought it most unfair to the agricultural interest that

these two measures, attacking them, should have been brought into their Lordships' House before the other measures to which he referred had passed a second reading in the House of Commons. The only remedial measures from which he anticipated any benefit at all, was that under which it was proposed to lend money for the improvement of land. He thought that such a measure might, to a certain extent, be of some value; but he considered this Bill and the Corn Bill to be as bad measures as could possibly have been introduced. This Bill was inconsistent with the declaration of the Ministers themselves. They were told that the Ministers wished to establish free trade; but he would ask if there was a single line in this Bill for the establishment of free trade? It was, certainly, a free-trade measure with reference to the agriculturists and the landed interest; but they would find, on looking into the Bill, that there was to be no reduction of duty upon our cottons in India. It was true the duties on some manufactures were to be reduced, but that was not free trade. He objected to free trade altogether; and, though the Minister might propose to take away all protection from the agricultural interest, he (the Duke of Richmond) was not prepared, because the Minister robbed the agricultural interest, to turn robber himself, and, by establishing free trade, to throw out of employment the great body of the operatives of this country. He considered that this was a most unjust measure; that it would throw out of employment a large body of silk weavers in this country; and that it would convert Spitalfields into a mass of pauperism. Many parts of this Bill were extremely obnoxious. He called upon their Lordships to remember that, though the Members of the Government had in their speeches advocated free trade, they had not carried out free-trade principles to the utmost. There was nothing in this Bill to destroy differential duties. If they allowed corn to come into this country from the United States duty free, to the great injury of their Canadian provinces, he asked whether, on the principles of free trade, they ought not to permit the Canadians to buy their cotton in the cheapest market? If they did this, the coarse cottons of this country would no longer be consumed in Canada, which now took from us a greater amount of this description of manufactures than the whole of the United States. The Americans would then beat us out of the Canadian markets with their

coarse cottons, as they had done in the South American markets, and as they were near doing in China, where they ran our manufactures very close. One of the great leaders of the League, a cotton manufacturer in Cheshire, Mr. Greg, had expressed his opinion, that before long he should see the coarser cottons of America competing effectually with our coarser cottons in Manchester itself. He (the Duke of Richmond) entered his protest against this Bill, as he had already protested against the Corn Bill. He must again repeat, that he regretted these Bills had been sent up unaccompanied by what were called the remedial measures to which he had before alluded. Sir R. Peel had declared his intention to do something to relieve the agriculturists from highway rates, and the burden of medical relief; but this was not to be done by a Bill; it was to be by an annual vote in Parliament. Why had not Sir R. Peel given the landed interest security by a Bill, instead of by Resolutions? For if the right hon. Baronet left office, and he was succeeded by the noble Lords on his right (the Opposition), they might not be able to maintain it, and then the League would come in, and they would not allow them the penny per acre which Sir R. Peel proposed to give to the agricultural interest.

LORD MONTEAGLE said, these preliminary discussions were very inconvenient; but he could not allow the observations of his noble Friend who had just sat down to pass as conclusive. The noble Duke complained that the measure read a first time last night established a system of free trade, and that the one just brought up was not a measure of free trade. The noble Duke contended, therefore, that there was a difference between the two measures of the Government as they affected commerce and agriculture. He could not acquiesce in one part of the noble Duke's objection to the measure, as it would affect the finances of the country. He denied that the principles of free trade required, on the part of their Lordships, or of any abstract reasoner, a sacrifice of the revenue duties of the country. The principles of free trade demanded the sacrifice of protection, but they were not at all inconsistent with the maintenance of revenue duties on those articles and in that manner which rendered them least burdensome to the people. The principle which he contended for was, that when they put their hands into the pockets of the people, they should do so in order to

obtain, at the least possible expense to the people, that amount of revenue which the public service required; and he could not agree to the statement that in the maintenance of the revenue duties there was any affirmation of, or opposition to, the principles of free trade.

LORD BEAUMONT thought, that the course which his noble Friend on the cross benches (the Duke of Richmond) had taken was not only consistent, but necessary. The noble Duke had placed the case in this way. He objected to the Bill which they had read a first time last night. He said, that it was opposed to the principle of protection, and therefore he was opposed to it; and in speaking of the Bill then before the House, he had remarked that it was inconsistent with the principle of the former Bill, inasmuch as the principle of protection was retained. Whatever his noble Friend might have thought of the Bill, he thought that their Lordships ought at any rate to maintain a character for consistency, so far as that, if in the first Bill they agreed to an abandonment of the principle of protection, they ought not in the second Bill to introduce a contrary principle. It was in his (Lord Beaumont's) opinion absolutely necessary that the Bill before them should be delayed until they had given the first Bill (the Corn Importation Bill) a full consideration, in order that they might know how far the second Bill could be reconciled to the first Bill, and thus judge of the degree of consistency between the two measures. He hoped that his noble Friend (Lord Montenglo) would act up to the principles he had advocated in his speech, and consider the second Bill solely on the principle of revenue duties; and if he did so he would agree to some of the objections urged by the noble Duke on the cross benches, for he would find duties retained in the Bill with respect to the trade of the Colonies, and to the silk trade, which had been looked upon as protection duties. He hoped, therefore, that he would regard all the articles enumerated in the second Bill solely with a view to the maintenance of revenue duties, and not with respect to the principle of free trade and protection. He would assure his noble Friend, that the interpretation which was put upon free trade by the country was that which was put upon it by the Anti-Corn-Law League, namely, the total abolition of duties. Those who now opposed the cry of free trade would be found perhaps,

when protection was taken away from one interest, ready to join in that unfortunate cry; and they might rely upon it, that the Custom House itself might not long survive the bonded warehouses. His noble Friend on the cross benches had spoken of free trade in the sense in which it was understood out of doors; and he could assure them, that in agreeing to that cry of free trade, they would run the risk of seeing the customs duties assailed at a future period.

LORD BROUGHAM felt that no advantage could result from anticipating the discussion of this Bill, for there was no doubt that it would be discussed when the Corn Bill was before them; but he could not allow this discussion to close without protesting against the idea that it was an impeachment of the principles of free trade to maintain duties for the purpose of revenue. There was no ground for such a supposition in proposing to take the duty off corn, the principal food of the people.

EARL GREY agreed with the noble and learned Lord that this was an inconvenient period for the discussion of the Bill, and he hoped that when it was proposed for a second reading, when it would no doubt be fully discussed, the Government would be prepared to state the grounds upon which they had introduced a Bill proposing to do so much, and had not introduced a measure to do more. He agreed with some of the observations made by the noble Duke on the cross benches; but although he did not look upon it as anything like free trade, yet he would accept it as an instalment of free trade. He had not changed the opinions which he had maintained ever since he came into Parliament; he was against all protection to all kinds of interests. He wished to see duties levied for revenue, and for revenue only. He was prepared—and he was conscious the country was prepared—for a general reform of our commercial system, in order that there might be unrestricted liberty afforded to industry; and that was a system the advantages of which would be recognised, if it were once adopted, by both producers and consumers. The noble Duke on the cross benches referred to Canada, and stated that the Canadians were not placed on equal terms with the people of the United States, if they were compelled to compete with them in our markets, and were not allowed to obtain the cheap coarse cotton fabrics of America. Now, he (Earl Grey) would state, on behalf of the great and intelli-

gent body of the manufacturers of this kingdom, that they were willing and prepared to give up all protection, for they did not depend upon protection for their success, but upon their enterprise and energy and skill, and that as they wished to buy corn where it was cheapest, so they did not expect that the Canadians should be compelled by a differential duty to give the preference to their cottons. If they applied their skill and capital to the manufacture of the superior descriptions of cotton, and the Americans, from the cheapness of cotton and other facilities, were able to manufacture coarse cotton cheaper, they might both advantageously employ themselves.

LORD ASHBURTON considered the measures which had been introduced to their Lordships' notice on that and on the preceding day, of vital importance—he meant, of course, the Bill respecting the Corn Laws and the Tariff, which they were now discussing; and he thought it was proper that they should have before them the entire of that new system, and see the whole produce of that new light which had suddenly dawned upon the Government. Whether these measures were for good or for evil—whether they would bring round such an extraordinary state of prosperity as his noble Friend opposite seemed to anticipate, or whether they would be essentially detrimental to all the industrial classes of the community, as he was inclined to think, it was of the highest importance, and every way becoming in their Lordships, that these measures should receive the greatest possible attention. He did not find fault with any noble Lord for inviting a discussion even upon the first stage of such measures. From first to last their Lordships must be desirous of having all the light possible thrown upon subjects of such immense consequence. As for the definition of his noble Friend opposite (Lord Monteagle), he did not think much of it. He agreed with his noble Friend in thinking it a question of protection or no-protection. He did not approve of that tricky, shuffling sort of definition, which was not very intelligible or distinct, and which was not generally accepted in the complicated sense in which his noble Friend had used it. It was easy to understand the views of the noble Earl (Grey), who was quite a purist—whose free-trade opinions were free from a tinge of protection. He confessed he was at a loss to understand the policy of the Government. They had restrained

the German Zollverein and the French from exporting their produce into this country—they had for years kept up a system of restriction; and upon what experience were they now about to abandon it? They had incurred immense expense and risk—they had engaged in heavy and expensive wars for the purpose of maintaining their Colonies—they had insisted, at the loss of much blood and treasure, on protecting their Colonies by giving a preference to their produce; and, on the other hand, providing that our manufactures should have a preference by our Colonies; but now it seemed there was to be no preference whatever. Why keep the Colonies at all? Why incur all this enormous expense? Not to benefit themselves, but to benefit the whole world. You will have the charge, they the advantage. He repeated, this was a system perfectly new and unusual; and he very much doubted whether those manufacturers, of whom his noble Friend entertained such great and magnanimous feelings, would take such comprehensive and disinterested views as his noble Friend imagined. He (Lord Ashburton) thought their opinions would be more tradesman-like, and, notwithstanding the interest they evinced in commercial reform, would, when they found no preference given to their fabrics, even in the Colonies, over American goods, alter their opinions, and begin to see the value of protection. The coarser description of cotton goods, which were manufactured in the United States, would, in the event of perfect free trade, speedily come into competition with ours in the Canadian market, and our manufacturers would find the case very different in respect to this class of goods, with the finer fabrics, which were consumed by a higher and smaller class only. Some time ago there was a meeting at Manchester—a free-trade meeting—and a Manchester man, in urging the free-trade doctrines, said, there was the Macclesfield silk weaver who would have no objection to the introduction of foreign silk duty free; but Macclesfield manufacturers who were present, though quite approving of free trade in any other article, begged to be excused as far as silk was concerned. In short, these free-trade theories, though people might give a general approval of them, they would, when it came to their own case, be quite ready to dissent from, and, in that respect, be stern protectionists. They might as well expect that the Newcastle coalowners would be willing to have

free importation of fuel there, as that the manufacturers would be willing to have a free importation of foreign goods. The Government had brought in two measures: one, the Corn Bill, to affect agriculture; the other, the Tariff, to apply to commerce. Supposing both interests to be equally affected by the respective measures, they would, after all, be only equally injured. As to the Tariff being any compensation to the farmer, it was no more a compensation to him, than to the crew of a foundering ship to be told that their neighbours in another ship, which had struck against a rock, were going down also.

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE agreed with every noble Lord who had spoken, that it was inconvenient and unusual to enter into the discussion of these measures at present; but, unlike them, would act up to his belief. But he could not permit the sentiments which had been uttered to go forth without at the same time stating, that if these assertions had not been contradicted—if these opinions had not been controverted—it was not from any unwillingness to engage in argument, but merely because the Government did not consider this the proper stage for discussion. When the proper time arrived, the Government would be fully prepared to state the reasons which had induced them to bring these measures before Parliament; and he also stated that they would be able to show to their Lordships good grounds for asking them for their ready and unqualified support.

The DUKE OF RICHMOND again rose and said: My Lords, my noble Friend who has just sat down says it is unusual to enter into a discussion on a subject of this kind in the present stage of the Bill; but I must remind him, without in any manner wishing to make a personal attack, that it is also "unusual"—most unusual—for a Government to change their opinions so suddenly on great questions of public policy, and for the Government of one year to vote and argue against free trade, and the same Government in the following year to vote for and argue and introduce a free-trade measure. If the Government will pursue so unusual a course, particularly without appealing to the country—although the Members of the other House were returned without the sense of the electors having been taken on this most important principle—I say we are perfectly justified, under such extraordinary circumstances, in taking the unusual course of ob-

jecting to the first reading of the Bill. I could not permit the Bill to receive the first reading, entertaining the strong opinions I do, without recording my protest against it. I am willing and anxious—[A Noble Lord: Spoke.] I will not be prevented from delivering my opinions on this most important subject: I am much too old a man to be put down in that way. I say that the principle of this Bill is contrary to the principle of the other measure; the one is a free-trade measure, and the other proposes only partial free trade. But my objection is to the principle of both. I wish to maintain protection to British industry. I wish to maintain protection, because I think on the preservation of that principle depends the happiness, the welfare, and the prosperity of all classes of my fellow subjects.

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE explained, that he did not mean to say the noble Duke had not a perfect right to oppose the first stage of the Bill.

The EARL OF HADDINGTON said, there could not be the slightest doubt that his noble Friend on the cross bench exercised his right, as a Peer of Parliament, in entering his protest against a Bill upon the Motion being made for the first reading; nor did he understand his noble Friend behind him to blame for having so done; but his noble Friend spoke of that as an inconvenient time for discussing the measure, because it was, as he said, an unusual course. He entirely concurred in that opinion of his noble Friend, and without following the example that had been set by several noble Lords, each of whom had started three or four different points of discussion, he would merely say that it was not correct to assert that the present Government had ever been determined enemies to free trade.

Bill read a first time.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Tuesday, May 19, 1846.

CUSTOMS DUTIES BILL—AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS.

SIR ROBERT PEEL moved that the Bill be read a Third Time.

MR. STAFFORD O'BRIEN rose to put the question of which he had given notice regarding the production of agricul-

tural statistics. During the present Parliament, he believed in the year 1844, the question of agricultural statistics had been brought before the House by the hon. Member for Manchester, who was supported by the hon. Member for North Lincolnshire, than whom perhaps a more experienced agriculturist did not occupy a seat in that House. The hon. Member for Manchester consented to withdraw his Motion on the understanding that Her Majesty's Government would take some steps to obtain an alteration in the mode of obtaining those statistics. He believed it was understood that the Government of that day was unfavourable to the course which the hon. Member for Manchester proposed to pursue; but still there was an impression prevailing that they would take the matter into consideration, and the hon. Member withdrew his Motion. The cultivators of the soil had nothing to fear from the fullest disclosures; and if the House had been in possession of better information the agricultural interest would have been able to make out even a more complete case against the Corn Bill than they had made. He believed that Government must begin any undertaking of the kind slowly, and by degrees, lest they should create jealousy and suspicion on the part of the farmers; as those farmers became more enlightened, the inquiries might be pushed farther, and not limited, as in the first instance, to mere matters regarding the quantity of land in cultivation, or the number of cattle fed upon it. He apprehended that the machinery of the new Highway Bill, now before Parliament, might be advantageously employed for the purpose. It was ever to be borne in mind that the House was unanimous as to the value of the information, and as to the propriety of obtaining it.

SIR G. CLERK, as it was understood that no debate was to take place on the third reading of the Customs Duties Bill, would confine himself to the question of which notice was given, whether the Government had taken any and what steps for collecting agricultural statistics since the subject was last under the consideration of the House. The Government had endeavoured to proceed cautiously in the first instance, as was wished, and with the view of avoiding any jealousies on the part of the farmers. It had been anxious to ascertain whether the statistical information could be collected by means of existing machinery, and voluntarily, from the occupiers of land, rather than by any new and

expensive machinery. The experiment had been tried upon a small scale; the northern division of Hampshire had been taken, the county of Edinburgh, and a large union in the county of Cavan, extending over 6,000 acres. In the latter case, in Ireland, the information collected had been obtained by the voluntary assistance of very intelligent landowners; the number of subdivisions of land rendered it difficult to discover the manner in which it was cropped, but information had been furnished in a very creditable manner. In the Scotch county, the means employed had been the parochial schoolmasters; printed forms were sent to them to leave with every occupier of land, to obtain a statement of the manner in which the land had been cropped, how many acres were under each species of cultivation, and the number of cattle, sheep, horses, and so on, upon the farm: the information had been very satisfactorily obtained, and put in a tabular form. With regard to Hampshire, the efforts of the Government had not at present been attended with success; they had been made through the Poor Law officers, the boards of guardians, who gave each occupier a form of return to fill up. Whether it was from some degree of jealousy or from apathy on a subject of such importance as this, he could not tell, but they had not been able to get the returns completed. Under these circumstances, therefore, he was bound to say that it might become expedient, in order to get the desired information, to make these returns compulsory within a certain time; otherwise he was afraid the object contemplated would not be successfully carried out. In the mean time, however, he was not prepared to say whether any legislative measure would be brought in for that purpose, or whether they would try for another year to obtain the returns voluntarily. If they could be obtained voluntarily, certainly that mode of procuring the information would be most desirable; and he trusted that, after the expression of opinion which his hon. Friend had given, they would be able next year to obtain returns, not from one county only, but from every county in England.

LORD G. BENTINCK, as the subject under consideration referred to statistical details, wished to ask if some means could not be devised of procuring statistical details in regard to the manufactures of the country. It had been stated as a fact in that House that the home consumption of

the cotton manufacture was one-eighth of the whole production of the country. Now, he thought that if accurate information could be obtained, the home consumption would be found to amount to two-thirds of the whole manufactures of the country.

Mr. BRIGHT presumed the noble Lord must be acquainted with the fact, that they could obtain from the Customs an account of the raw material imported into the country, and of the manufactured goods exported. If they imported annually 500,000,000 or 600,000,000 pounds weight of cotton, and exported annually a certain amount, all they had to do was to apply the simple rule of subtraction, to find out what was the quantity that remained in the country. There was, no doubt, one defect in these returns—they were not always given in the same way—the returns being in weight in one case and not in weight in another; but it was well known that it was impossible for any Government to ascertain the exact amount of all the different kinds of goods, or no doubt they would have much pleasure in giving the information. When his hon. Friend the Member for Manchester (Mr. M. Gibson) said they ought to have agricultural information, he meant it for the benefit of the agriculturists themselves, and not from any mere wish to inquire what they were doing. He believed that, in reference to the manufacturing interest of the country, the noble Lord might obtain much information from inspectors.

Mr. MILES was anxious that Government should take up the matter with as little delay as possible, and recommended that at all events the Poor Law guardians should not be resorted to to procure information, which he apprehended could be better obtained by voluntary means.

Bill read a third time and passed.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Monday, May 25, 1846.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL—SECOND READING.

Order of the Day for the Second Reading read.

The EARL OF RIPON: My Lords, however desirous I must naturally be to compress within the smallest compass I can the observations which it is my duty to

address to your Lordships on this important question, I fear that the very importance of that question, as well as certain circumstances personally applying to myself, may compel me, however reluctantly, at some length to trespass on your patience. For that patience I ask. Your indulgence I do not ask, because doing so might have the appearance of my feeling that I was about to do, or that I had done, something for which I was bound to make excuses and apologies to your Lordships. My Lords, I am about to discharge a duty which I have with a clear conscience taken on myself. I have therefore, no apology to make. At the same time, I have experienced on many occasions too much of the kindness of this House to doubt one moment that that patience which I ask will willingly be extended to me. I have stated that this is an important question—I have always considered it to be by far the most important question affecting the social condition of the country to which the attention of Parliament can be directed—important, my Lords, inasmuch as it affects, in one way or another, every class of the community—important, as it is unfortunately calculated at the same time, whenever it is brought under discussion, to excite warm if not angry feelings, and to lead the mass of the people to think that one party is disposed to insist upon laws for their own advantage to the neglect of the good of others; while the same feeling in an opposite direction, may and does prevail on the other side. It is perfectly true, that in fair reasoning the interests of the two parties to which I refer, are really and substantially identical. But it is extremely difficult, considering the nature of the question—considering that it refers to that which is absolutely necessary—a sufficiency of food for the people—it is extremely difficult to induce the great mass of mankind to believe that identity of interest, and to refrain from the conclusion that those who entertain opposite opinions to their own, are influenced by conflicting interests which cannot be reconciled. I say, therefore, that the corn question is not only the most important, but that it is the most difficult of all questions; and that it is so, the course which Parliament has pursued on the subject sufficiently indicates. That course has been subject to great fluctuations, and to a great variety in the methods of dealing with it. Plans which at one time were considered calculated to produce public advantage, and to promote

the interest of the country, have at other periods been held to be utterly incompetent to the production of those effects, and have been abandoned as useless, to adopt some other substitute. I think this is a circumstance which shows the extreme difficulty in which the subject has been always considered to be involved. I am not insensible to these difficulties. True it is that I have taken an active part in the discussion of this subject. It was my lot many years ago to hold a situation in the Government of that day, and in that capacity to propose to Parliament a very important measure for the purpose of regulating the trade in corn. But I am most anxious—for my own vindication in respect to the course which I have pursued, not only on that but on many subsequent occasions, and, comparing it with the course which I deem it my duty to pursue on the present occasion—I am most anxious to explain to your Lordships what the principles were on which I supported these measures; and, above all, to show what were not the principles on which I recommended them to Parliament. When I introduced, in 1815, the Corn Bill of that day, I did it—I may say so confidently (and it is now so long since that I can hardly be anxious as to the inference to be drawn from the fact)—I did it—I did introduce that measure with the greatest reluctance. I was not a Member of the Government; that is to say, I only held a subordinate situation in it—and when the Earl of Liverpool sent to desire that I would move the measure, I took the liberty of expressing to him that I had a great objection to the principle of any Corn Law whatever. I thought then—I have thought ever since—that a Corn Law is in itself an evil to be justified solely by the establishment of some paramount necessity, sufficient to overcome the magnitude of the objection, and to sanction the imposition on the country of what is in itself an evil. In the address, therefore, which I then took the liberty of delivering, in the other House of Parliament, in reference to that subject, I so stated my opinions. I stated that I thought a Corn Law was a choice, not so much of difficulties, great as they were, as of positive evils; and I showed what the grounds were on which I thought Parliament would be justified in over-riding the general rule, and adopting the measure which I had undertaken to propose. I did not, however, propose that law, and I have never supported any Corn Law whatever upon many

of the grounds on which that system of policy has been supported by others. I have never, for instance, supported the Corn Law on account of any question of rent; and I have never supported it on account of the charges imposed on owners of land, arising from mortgages, settlements, and incumbrances of that nature. I consider that none of these matters had anything to do with the real question which was to be dealt with, and I never attached any weight to the arguments which were based upon views of that kind. I am perfectly aware that this line of argument in support of the Corn Law is now pretty generally abandoned—at least it is abandoned in Parliament. It may not be abandoned elsewhere; but I do think that it is not a ground on which any one is now prepared to vindicate restrictions on the first article of necessity in this country. I never supported a Corn Law upon the ground of its being a part of a great system of protection of national industry. On the contrary, I have always supported a law affecting corn on its own especial grounds, as being entirely contradistinguished from any other article of commerce, and as standing upon ground peculiar to itself. Indeed, it would have been impossible for me to have supported a Corn Law as a part of a great system of national policy intended to give uniform and universal protection to native industry, because over and over again I have laid down the opposite principle with reference to protection; and I have shared year after year in measures and arguments, the object of which was to break in the principle of what is called protection to British industry, and to get rid, as speedily as circumstances would permit, first of prohibition, and then of protection, which I have always held to be injurious not only to the country generally, but ultimately to the very interests which it is designed to serve. I have dwelt on this point, because at present I find the maintenance of a Corn Law supported and insisted on, as being part of a system of protection to British industry. I cannot support a Corn Law if that is to be the ground on which it is to be supported, not only temporarily, but permanently—viz., as part of a system from which we cannot depart without exposing the country to the most imminent danger. I have never supported a Corn Law on that principle, and therefore am not liable to reproach if I do not now support it on that principle. I deny that what is called protection to na-

tive industry has been the principle of national policy at all times, and under all circumstances; for when I consider what has been the law and policy of this country from time to time, I do not find that such has ever been avowed as the principle of national legislation; but, on the contrary, the legislation of the country has been over and over again adverse to that principle; and though some cases have been referred to as showing the desire of Parliament to maintain the principle in all its integrity, they really have no reference whatever to it. I had occasion once to point out to your Lordships, when we were about to take into consideration the Tariff of 1842—I had occasion, I say, then to point out to your Lordships what the circumstances were which had given rise to what has been taken, I think erroneously, to be the establishment of that system of protection. It is true that very high duties had been imposed upon the admission of foreign articles into this country, and that they had the effect, in their operation, of being protective duties; but when we come to the question, and consider it as a question of principle, we must look to what the motives of the Legislature were in imposing those duties. Looking at the case in this point of view, you will find that, in an immense number of instances, those high duties were the result of fiscal necessity. An addition of 25 per cent. was imposed upon the customs duties for the sole purpose of revenue, without any consideration of the particular mode in which the increased duties would affect the general trade and commerce of the country. They did not, in fact, rest upon any general principle. I will refer your Lordships to the instance of one article which has been much spoken of—I mean timber. The duty on timber has been supposed to form a part of this great system of protection to native industry. Now, my Lords, whatever it may have become, it certainly was not so forty years ago; for until the year 1809, when a higher amount of duty was first imposed upon foreign timber, the duty on timber was next to nothing; and no one, at that time, thought of protecting either the timber of our own country or of the Colonies by any system of duties of that description. Now, from what did this increased duty arise? It arose from the accidental circumstances of our being then engaged in hostilities with the Northern Powers, who were at that time under the influence of Napoleon. To show that that

system of duties was not interwoven with our commercial constitution, if he might use the phrase, the Act imposing those high duties was passed only during the duration of war, and might have expired in the course of two or three years afterwards, if peace had taken place. That shows, however, that this notion of high duties on timber being part of a grand system for the purpose of protecting native industry, cannot be supported in fact. So again in respect to the duties which were levied, or supposed to be levied, for the protection of agriculture. Take, as an example, the wool trade. Now, there was no duty levied on foreign wool up to the year 1819, and then a duty was imposed for the sole purpose of revenue. My Lords, I must know something of that, because I happened in the House of Commons to move the resolution upon which the imposition of that duty took place, and I can state that the object in laying that duty upon the introduction of foreign wool was to obtain a surplus revenue. The exportation of British wool was formerly prohibited, and all sorts of absurd and inconvenient restrictions were in force with respect to moving wool from one part of the kingdom to another—restrictions which were inconsistent with free trade of any kind, and equally inconsistent with the notion that an important article like this was entitled to have and did possess a share in a protective system. Again, with respect to the manner in which the articles of butter and cheese, and things of that kind, were dealt with by the Legislature: they were not liable formerly to any duty at all. It was not till the year 1816 that any duty was imposed upon either of these articles. It may have been wise, it may have been foolish, to impose a duty upon articles like these; but it never had been considered before to be necessary to give that part of our agricultural population who dealt in these articles of produce the advantage, or the supposed advantage, of protection for their industry. This, therefore, was no part of that general system of protection to agriculture, on which so much stress had been laid. I consider myself, therefore, my Lords, at liberty to assert that I have never supported a Corn Law on any of those principles which are now so much insisted upon. The only ground on which I reconciled myself to the fitness of a Corn Law at all, was my apprehension—an apprehension which I most sincerely entertained—that this country would become, or might become, more dependent

than in prudence she ought to be upon supplies of corn from foreign countries. I am glad to find that I am not misunderstood. That is the only ground on which I ever have thought that Parliament would be justified in levying a duty upon the admission of foreign corn. Now, undoubtedly, that is a ground which must at all times be fairly liable to be questioned as a matter of fact. It may always be fairly asked whether a necessity for excluding foreign corn does exist, and whether there may not be circumstances connected with the cultivation of the soil of this country which may either make that exclusion not necessary, or may aggravate the evil which protective laws were intended to diminish. That is the ground upon which we have to consider the Corn Laws at the present moment. The Corn Laws have indeed been described as being almost too sacred to touch, and as being a part of the Constitution of the country; but I certainly do not feel it necessary to advert to considerations of that description. Before we come to the conclusion that the Corn Laws are intimately connected with the political, the commercial, and the financial interests of the country, we may ask whether they are required to be maintained permanently? because if they are not to be maintained permanently, you reduce the question to a mere matter of time; but if it be contended that they must be permanently maintained, then, I will ask your Lordships to review the course of practical legislation which has been adopted by Parliament from time to time with reference to these laws. Certainly during a part of the last century frequent changes were made in the laws affecting the importation of corn; at some times they were made more stringently restrictive than they were at other periods. There existed also during many periods of the last century the same alarms with respect to agriculture and the condition of those engaged in the cultivation of the soil, which prevail at the present day. You will find among the publications of Sir Robert Walpole's day, pamphlets without end describing the agricultural interest as totally ruined, and declaring that the landlords could get no rent, and that the tenants were without any return for the capital which they had sunk upon the land, and depicting the condition of the agricultural population in the most gloomy and melancholy colours. No such ruin, however, ensued. The agriculture of the country went on extending and improving

itself, and daily became more and more capable of meeting the demands of the population. At last, however, a Corn Law was passed; and the first interference with the importation of corn to which I will call the attention of your Lordships is the Corn Law of 1791. That Corn Law was very restrictive in its nature; not so much so, indeed, as those that were afterwards adopted; but still it was very restrictive. It imposed a very high duty on foreign corn when the corn of this country was under the price of 50s.; when at 50s. and under 54s. a medium duty of 2s. 6d. was levied; and when it reached the price of 54s., then it was admissible at a duty of 6d. That law of 1791 went on for a certain time, until at last its operation was entirely over-ridden for a series of years by the effects of the seasons. It is very well known, though it may not be within the personal recollection of some noble Lords, that in the year 1795 and subsequent years of that century, and for several years at the beginning of the present century, the prices of corn were so enormously high, that the protective portion of the duty imposed by the law of 1791 never came into operation at all. It is well known that year after year foreign corn was imported into this country without paying any higher duty than 6d. But this was not all. There were many times during that period when the pressure of want was so severe that Parliament had recourse to very extraordinary means of bringing into the country additional supplies of food: the price to which a high duty attached was raised from 50s. to 63s.; when the price was between 63s. and 66s. a duty of 2s. 6d. was levied; and when the price was above 66s. wheat was admitted at 6d. per quarter. Bounties were offered upon the importation of corn; and I believe that not less than one million and a half was given by way of bounty for bringing corn from every part of the world whenever it could be scraped together. There can be no doubt, my Lords, that at that time the pressure of scarcity was tremendous. At last, however, in the year 1804, it was found or thought that this Act of 1791, which was considered to be a perfect specimen of the mode in which protection ought to be given, was comparatively of no value, since in 1803 the harvest was very abundant, and the price of corn was considerably lower than it had been. It was thought, therefore, that the Act of 1791 was not sufficiently stringent, and accordingly a higher protecting duty

was imposed by the Act of 1804. By this measure the measure of 1804 was supported, but was not brought forward by the Government of that day as a measure necessary to secure the increase and extension of agriculture, and in that way to facilitate the supply of food. But this Act was inoperative for a great portion of the time during which it continued in force; for prices continued for a succession of years at a great elevation, and there was a severe pressure upon the poorer classes of the community; and at last, when the war terminated in 1815, it was found, or supposed to be found, that this Act of 1804, which was more stringent than the measure of 1791, was, nevertheless, not sufficiently protective of British agriculture. The schemes of 1791 and 1804 were found to be worth nothing, and a new measure was brought forward in 1815. That was certainly not a very popular law, either at the time of its enactment or after the country had had a short experience of its operation. I need not trouble your Lordships with any detail of figures to show how imperfectly that law did operate; but I recollect perfectly well that it was the subject of general complaint, and not so much a subject of complaint among those who originally objected to it, as among those who were most anxious for some new measure, because the law of 1815 was held to be utterly inefficient for its purpose. Its inefficiency, my Lords, I entirely admit. I admit that the measure was liable to very great objection; it was not a good law for the purposes it was designed to effect, and those who most loudly condemned it were the very persons for whose benefit it had been passed. In 1820 it was admitted that this law had been utterly inefficient; and in that year a proposition was made in the House of Commons that the subject should be referred to a Committee, with a view of rendering the law of 1815—the stringency of which no one could deny—still more stringent. I opposed that Motion on the part of the Government in the House of Commons; but it was sanctioned by the House of Commons, and a Committee was appointed, whose labours were subsequently restricted to the minor question as to the mode of taking the averages. A year or two afterwards another Committee was appointed, and the subject was thoroughly investigated; but their recommendations were not such as had been anticipated by the agricultural interest. The report of that Committee was drawn up by

Mr. Huskisson, who, though not chairman of the Committee, was requested to prepare it, and a very elaborate document it was. It contained much sound reasoning and valuable information. This report became the foundation of an alteration of the law of 1815, with the object of relaxing by degrees the restrictions of that law, so as to admit foreign wheat before prices had reached the extreme height at which, under that Bill, importation was likely to commence. The law for effecting this alteration was passed in 1822; but it was strongly objected to by many individuals connected with the agricultural interest. In point of fact, it never came into operation, for its operation was to depend upon the price of corn reaching a certain height, which it did not attain so long as that law remained in force. It was felt, however, that this law would be attended with great inconvenience; and it became necessary for Parliament to interfere, on more occasions than one, to suspend its operation: in one case by Act of Parliament, and in another by an exercise of the power vested in the Executive Government. He (the Earl of Ripon) could not say much for the principle of a law which it was necessary to suspend at the moment a severe pressure was felt. The evil, indeed, was felt so strongly, that in 1827 the attention of Parliament was again called to the subject, and a new scheme was devised, intended so to arrange the nature of the protection afforded, that the law should always regulate itself, and correct all the evils to which preceding Corn Laws had given rise. The Act of Parliament for effecting this alteration was finally passed in 1828. It was introduced into Parliament by Mr. Canning, in 1827; in the course of the summer of that year it reached the House of Lords; but, in consequence of some alterations made in it in their Lordships' House, it did not then pass into a law. A similar measure was, however, again introduced into Parliament in 1828, and adopted; and that law continued in operation till 1842. There were, however, many circumstances in the details, the practice, and the working of that law, which in the progress of time became the subjects of much criticism and objection. Many persons who had given serious consideration to the question were of opinion that that measure was open to great objection on account of the sudden fluctuations in the amount of duty, and the sort of jumping scale which it established; and it was finally altered in 1842, when the

present law received the sanction of Parliament. I have mentioned these changes, my Lords, for the purpose of showing that if this system of protection be one which is so essential and so interwoven with the interests of the country as has been represented, it is the least stable that could possibly have been devised for the purpose of maintaining a permanent place in our policy. I confess, therefore, notwithstanding all the objections which have been urged against the removal of protection, notwithstanding the statements that without protection agriculture must go to ruin, and that the application of capital to land must entirely cease—when I see what is going on at this very moment, notwithstanding all the feeling which has been excited in the country, and all the apprehensions which have been aroused in Parliament and elsewhere—when I see this, and perceive that there are no practical symptoms of a decline of agriculture, and no symptoms of land being thrown out of cultivation—I confess, I say, I cannot bring myself to think that this system is essential to the due and perfect cultivation of the soil of this country. Again, if I am entitled to look at this question as one which does not bear and never has borne the character of permanence, the question becomes narrowed to a mere question of time. But the moment it is admitted to be a question of time, the principle of protection is gone altogether. There would, however, necessarily be great differences of opinion as to this point; but the moment it is admitted that the question is merely one of time, the question of principle is put altogether out of view. If it is admitted that the question is one of time, and not of principle, no man is open to reproach who avows his conviction that the time for an alteration of the law has arrived. This is the point of view in which I contend we are bound to consider this subject at this time. There are some circumstances to which I feel it my duty to refer, which have a peculiar bearing at this moment upon the present question. I will first refer to what I regard as a most important consideration,—the great, rapid, uncontrolled, and uncontrollable increase in the population of this country. This is a consideration which deserves serious attention. The tendency of population in any country to press upon the limits of subsistence, is a maxim which does not admit of dispute; it is established by the soundest reasoning, and by the application of indisputable facts. If, then,

population has a tendency to increase almost in a geometrical ratio, and if the production of food does not keep pace with that increase, it is evident that some means must be adopted for meeting the increased demand. It has been stated, that the population of this country is increasing at the rate of between 300,000 and 400,000 annually. Now, though the application of capital and skill to the improvement of land has tended greatly to increase the quantity of corn produced in this country, and has to some extent afforded a supply for the increasing wants of the population, it is a very remarkable circumstance, that during the last few years, though the price of corn has not been very high, there has been a regular importation of foreign wheat to a considerable amount for consumption in this country. Now, if this corn is not wanted, I wish to know how it came to be imported into and bought in this country? Certainly, if it was necessary to bring into consumption these quantities of foreign corn, the fact is clearly established that the population has outstripped the means immediately possessed by this country of meeting their wants with regard to a supply of food. I may refer to another circumstance which, in the consideration of this question as one of time, applies with peculiar force. I refer to the position in which Ireland has been placed with regard to a supply of food. I am aware that considerable difference of opinion exist on this subject, and I do not wish to lay too much stress upon the circumstance. ["Hear, hear!"] I do not wish to lay too much stress upon that fact as an argument for the present measure.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND: That is contrary to what Sir R. Peel says.

THE EARL OF RIPON: I do not see, my Lords, that I am necessarily called upon, in enforcing any particular measure, to say that my views of particular arguments are directly coincident with those of anybody else. I do not reject any views which have been put forth by the Government; but I may say that I do not lay any great stress upon the scarcity in Ireland, though I do think that it has a very great and serious bearing on this question. A deficiency of food in Ireland is not the same thing as a deficiency in this country; and the deficiency of that particular sort of food on which the Irish people chiefly subsist, necessarily produces indescribable misery and wretchedness. In Ireland those who suffer from the failure of the

potato crop were persons who, in 99 instances out of 100, lived upon that food alone, which was the produce of their own land. The Irish people have not the resources of good wages, as we have in England. The wages in Ireland are very low; and there are hundreds and thousands of people in Ireland who derive no part of their subsistence from the wages of labour, but merely live upon the produce of a small portion of land—a circumstance which leads to so much competition for its possession, and to the evils and mischief to which such competition gives rise. When scarcity comes, there is no resource for the population of Ireland to fall back upon except charity. They are very charitable to one another, and assist one another as long as they have the means; but it is impossible that, under such circumstances, a large mass of people can be maintained in this manner. I know that it has been said that it is nonsense to talk of famine in Ireland, because there is no deficiency of crops of oats and wheat in that country; that while a large proportion of the people of Ireland is said to be starving, hundreds and thousands of quarters of wheat and oats are coming over to this country. My Lords, it is very true that wheat and oats do come to this country from Ireland, because here the Irish find a market for their produce; they can find no such market at home. If they have no employment and no money which will furnish them with the means of buying that which would otherwise remain in the country, their corn will infallibly come here; but that does not make their wretchedness less. The people of Ireland must be fed, and therefore the existence of such a state of things as scarcity in Ireland is a grave matter for consideration when we are deliberating upon the question of a supply of food for the Empire. It has been said that it would have been better to have suspended the present Corn Law; I think that would have been a most undesirable course; a suspension of the law ought never to be undertaken unless circumstances will entirely justify the application of such a remedy. When this plan was discussed in the other House of Parliament, it was said that if the law were repealed for a limited time to meet the distress which was now experienced, those who advocated protection would not be disposed to object to that arrangement; but I will ask, did it ever occur to the advocates of the Corn Law, who proposed that temporary suspension,

that such a suspension of the Corn Law would destroy its vitality altogether? The principle upon which the Corn Law is defended, the principle upon which it has been supported, is, that it is capable of meeting all cases which could possibly occur—that the arrangement by which the duty falls as the price rises, and the duty rises as the price falls, would enable corn to be introduced into the country precisely according to the want indicated by the price. That is the theory upon which the law was introduced; and if it is not capable of producing that effect, of meeting any casual deficiency, that theory cannot be supported. The moment you come to suspend its operation you condemn its principle, by saying it is not capable of affording that relief which, according to your theory, it was intended to afford; and those, therefore, who say it ought to be suspended, cannot avoid seeing that if once suspended it will be impossible to revert to a system which was found to be incapable of maintaining itself. Now, with respect to the importation of foreign corn. I apprehend that the ground upon which this measure for admitting the importation of foreign corn is opposed by the advocates of protection, is the risk which we would thus run of throwing land out of cultivation.

LORD STANLEY: That is one of the grounds.

THE EARL OF RIPON: My noble Friend says it is one of the grounds; but in my view it is the only important one. I have ever viewed it as such. I have always looked upon it as the greatest ground of objection which has been urged, and I have never been able to ascertain upon what that argument has been founded. Why do they think that such a result would follow the passing of this measure? To what extent would the land be thrown out of cultivation? What species of land is it that would be likely to be thrown out of cultivation? I have never been able to ascertain that. But I know it has been stated that very large tracts of country would cease to be cultivated if this measure were carried; and as a proof reference has recently been made to particular districts, which would, it is said, in such an event, fall back into their original barrenness, and become capable of producing nothing but rabbits. That part of the country is certainly one which has been as much indebted as any other district in the United Kingdom for its improvement to the liberality of the landlords, and the spirit,

energy, and skill of the tenants; and it would afford every one who traversed that county pleasure to reflect on the difference in its condition, which has been the result of its superior cultivation. There has been an admirable description of what it now is and what it once was, published by the hon. Member for Berkshire, which was printed in the *Royal Agricultural Journal*. The hon. Member describes what it was before its reclamation, and what it is at present. He describes it as a large district, which is cultivated in a manner that reflects honour upon those to whom the land belongs, and upon those who practically carried out the improvement for its cultivation. It is not, however, stated by the hon. Member (Mr. Pusey) that all this improvement has been the consequence of protection; but that district has been referred to by others as a proof of the effects of the Corn Laws; and the deduction has been drawn that if the operation of the Corn Laws were to cease, that land would relapse into its original sterility. I, however, see no reason to think that such would be the case, and may add that I know something about that district, for nearly all the land I possess in that county is on that very heath—Lincoln Heath—which I have let, together with portions of the fens assigned, to the heath farmers. That part of the district in which the lighthouse was erected a century ago for the purpose of marking the road—such a wild and barren track was it—belongs to me; but this has now been transformed into a fertile district, very much to the advantage of the owner of the ground, and of those who cultivate it. The owners of the soil in this neighbourhood, in the years 1809, 1810, 1811, and 1812, turned their attention to the expenditure of capital in the enclosure and cultivation of tracts of land which were susceptible of improvement, and thus they were brought into their present superior shape. The result of this application of capital and industry has been that this sterile district has become one of the most beautifully farmed parts of Lincolnshire; and I never heard from any of its present industrious occupants any expression of fear that this measure, if carried, would deprive them of the means of obtaining a fair return for their capital. I have heard no representations of that kind from the tenants—I heard of no desire to give up farms on grounds of that nature; and it so happens that when circumstances recently

placed at my disposal a portion of my estates in that district, in the midst of all the alarms which were raised, and all the difficulties which it was said would follow any measure of this nature, it was my fortunate lot to let a considerable portion of my estate not at a reduced rent, but at positively an increased rent. What could be a stronger proof that the farmers in that district did not anticipate any risk of the land being thrown out of cultivation by a removal of the existing system of Corn Laws? The increasing population of the country is of itself a powerful stimulus to the application of capital in the improvement of the land. The people must have food; but it does not follow that the only means of maintaining that supply are to arise from importation. It does not follow that because a portion of foreign corn will be imported, that no spirit and energy are to be applied to increase the production at home. For my part I see no cause to believe that such results would follow the termination of a protective system. With respect to the details of the Bill, I do not know that it is necessary for me on this occasion to go into them at any length, for your Lordships must all be well acquainted with the nature of its provisions; but there is one point on which a material difference of opinion prevails, and which I may allude to in passing—it is whether the termination of the existing protection ought to be immediate, or whether it ought to come into operation in three years from the introduction of the measure. As the Bill at present stands there is a modified protection to be maintained for three years; and although I have no apprehension that any evil consequences would arise if protection were to terminate at once, yet it is wise that in questions of this kind sudden and extreme changes should be avoided; and if the protection terminates at no distant period, it appears to me that to insist upon its termination immediately would not be necessary, and would not be sufficient to counterbalance any disadvantages which might arise from pressing for it. I feel, my Lords—painfully feel—the imperfect manner in which I have dealt with this question; nor can I suppose that any observations I have made can operate in producing conviction on the minds of those noble Lords who hear me, and who are so well capable of forming their own opinions on the important subject before the House; but this I can truly state—that I do not feel, and cannot think that I ought

to feel any blame at the part I have taken on myself—first, in being a party to this measure, and secondly, in proposing it to the House. I know it will be said to be inconsistent with what I have formerly done, and that the opinions that I now express may be said to be inconsistent with what I formerly uttered in this House. I know that extracts may be made from the records of this House, which may perhaps be described as inconsistent with the reasons which move me in proposing the second reading of this measure; but I take no shame to myself for the course I have taken, because the only cause for throwing blame on a change of opinion is that it has proceeded from bad motives. I am not conscious, my Lords, in being influenced by any bad motives; on the contrary, I entertain a solemn conviction of the advantages which this measure is calculated to produce. That opinion has been formed after much reflection—reflection which was stimulated, I admit, by the necessity for adopting an alteration in our present system; and I therefore repeat my solemn conviction, that in proposing this measure for your adoption, I am not proposing to your Lordships a measure which could be injurious to any interest, but which, on the contrary, will do good to all. I may be wrong in the opinion which I have formed; and in acting upon it I may have forfeited the good opinion of many who thought well of me, and who may suppose that I have abandoned unnecessarily a cause which I have hitherto supported, and which many of my friends have honoured me by supposing that I had supported well. When I supported that cause, I supported it because I thought that in so doing I acted rightly and consistently with my sincere convictions; and if I propose this measure now, from a conviction of its necessity, and because the reasons upon which I advocated former measures no longer exist, I hope I shall stand fair in the eyes of your Lordships when I tell you that this is a question which I feel I can recommend to your consideration as one in which all are equally interested. The noble Earl concluded by moving the second reading of the Bill.

The Question having been put,

The DUKE OF RICHMOND: My Lords, I rise to move that this Bill be read a second time this day six months; because I feel in my conscience that no measure ever proposed by a British Minister to Parliament was more likely to inflict a deadly

blow on British agriculture, and therefore more fraught with ruin to the nation at large, than that which is now before your Lordships. I think, my Lords, we have just cause of complaint against my noble Friend who has just sat down, that he has not told your Lordships what in his opinion the price of corn will be if this measure should unfortunately pass into a law. My Lords, rash and blamable as I think they are, I cannot believe that Her Majesty's Ministers can be so totally reckless as to have introduced a measure, affecting so important an interest in the country, without having formed some estimate of its probable effects. And if they have done so, I ask, why withhold from this House information so necessary for fair, full, and impartial deliberation on this question? My Lords, it is most difficult for me in any way to account for the conduct and proceedings of Her Majesty's Ministers since the last Session of Parliament, and more particularly during the memorable month of November; but the surmise I make upon this head is, that the measures now before your Lordships were not submitted to the Cabinet until the Members of the Cabinet were pledged by Her Majesty's Speech from the Throne. For I will venture to say, that if those calculations had been fully gone into—if the returns necessary to form a proper estimate of the results of the Bill, had been laid upon your Lordships' Table, and fully considered, the state of things would be different. My Lords, this is the first time a Minister has ventured to bring forward a measure of this importance without being able to form an opinion upon the point I have just adverted to: if I am wrong in that conclusion, my noble Friend the President of the Board of Trade can set me right, by producing the estimates. My noble Friend opposite (and here I beg leave to say, that I have not the slightest desire to impute anything to him but the most praiseworthy motives) will permit me to say, that although he has carried us back to a very long period of time, he has not touched upon the most important period in all these considerations. He carried us so far back as the year 1822; but, my Lords, he never said a word about the year 1842—and yet that is the very Bill which has most to do with the question—the very Bill we are called upon to repeal. The noble Earl went so far back as 1791. My Lords, we are not called upon to repeal the Act of 1791—neither are we

called upon to pass an opinion upon the Act of 1822; but I say again we are called upon to repeal the Act of 1842. Upon that Act my noble Friend has not condescended to utter one syllable. My noble Friend was willing enough to advert to a former period; but upon this he was silent. I am now about to quote some words used upon former occasions by my noble Friend—and here I beg again to say that I make no personal attacks upon him; I quote his language because it conveys my sentiments in better words than I could hope to clothe them. My noble Friend, in 1815, said in the House of Commons, when he proposed the measure of that year—

“In looking to the principles which should guide their decision, the House ought to recollect that they were not now in the situation of arguing, for the first time, whether they should act on the principle of restriction or not. For not only on the subject of corn, but on all great branches of trade in this country, they had from time immemorial proceeded on a system of restriction. And, therefore, he contended they were not now placed in a situation of discussing first principles. They were not now for the first time to inquire whether they were to act on this principle or not. The system had been acted on for a long period, and we could not depart from it without encountering a frightful revulsion, which it would be dreadful to combat. It was not, therefore, a question between restriction and non-restriction, but how they were to apply principles that had been long called into action, to the existing circumstances of the country. This was the only ground on which he would now recommend the measures he was about to submit to their consideration.”*

That is the remarkable and forcible speech made by a Gentleman named Robinson, in the House of Commons in 1815. I must now call my noble Friend's attention to a speech, not made by Mr. Robinson in the House of Commons in 1815, but by a noble Lord in this House in the year 1841. It is quite fair to say that at that time the noble Lord to whom I allude was not sitting on the Ministerial benches. My Lords, the noble Lord was sitting on the Opposition benches. I will just read from his speech. I can assure my noble Friend that I don't want to hurt his feelings by arguing the Lord Ripon of 1841 against the Lord Ripon of 1846. I cannot, however, help saying, that I think it would have been better if the former opinions remained unchanged, and that I would much sooner be guided by his former than by his present arguments. In 1841 the noble Earl said, “Looking at the history of the

nation, and the motives by which men were governed, he could not believe that, for the sake of giving a little extension to the trade in corn, they would all at once abandon the whole settled policy which had, for upwards of a century, been held.

* * * It appeared to him that the Government scheme was false and vicious.” (The noble Lord alluded to an 8s. duty, which was then proposed.) “Under the supposition that the project of the Government would be carried into effect, no man could have a reasonable doubt”—what follows, my Lord?—not any fears from Lincoln Heath—but “that a very large portion of the corn land in this country would be thrown out of cultivation.” But if you wait for a moment you will see that you may get to Lincoln Heath:—“If the evil commenced, no one could say where they would stop, or what would be the disastrous consequences.”† So that my noble Friend looked forward to the period when the lighthouse would be again of use. I now come to another speech my noble Friend made in 1842: here he takes rather a different view of the question:—

“The great evil which I anticipate from the adoption of the principle that all restrictions on the importation of foreign corn should be withdrawn, is this, that the people of this country would be compelled to depend on other countries for their supply of corn—not to meet an occasional deficiency, but to depend altogether on other countries for the main part of their annual supply—that such dependence would be leaning on a broken reed—and that they would be habitually in danger of the failure of that supply. No one doubts, my Lords, that the progress of agriculture in this country has for many years past been most remarkable. That progress has been such as to keep pace with the demands of the people, (not entirely, for that was impossible,) but has been such as to supply—not entirely, but almost—the wants of our greatly increased population; and that with very little addition from foreign countries we may be said to be able to rely on our own resources. From many causes into which it is not my intention, nor is it necessary, to enter, the cost of agricultural production in this country has become higher than in other countries of Europe.”‡

My Lords (said the noble Duke) this is still the case—but my noble Friend went on to say—

“It is quite clear from what I have said, that the amount of our agricultural produce has been brought nearly equal to the demand; but this could not have been done unless capital had been applied to the land, and obtained such a return as induced the capitalist to continue his investment; but if you take away the protection which has been given to our home produce, you will cause

* Hansard's Debates, Second Series, Vol. xxix. p. 800.

† Ibid.

‡ Hansard, Third Series, Vol. lix. p. 50.

the withdrawal of some of the capital from the land; and, of course, the produce will be less, and you will then have to depend on foreign supply, not only for the amount you were in the habit of getting, but also for the amount you would lose by the withdrawal of a portion of the capital heretofore invested in the land."^{*}

Then my noble Friend went into another topic. It appears that it was doubted by some of your Lordships, that the Bill of 1842 was not to be final. Upon this head my noble Friend said—

"If the Ministers have been guilty of the crime of endeavouring to deceive the people of this country on this subject, I can only say, that they would be guilty not only of the most miserable as well as the basest political offence of which a Ministry could be guilty; but they would commit an act of inconceivable folly. I am convinced that this Bill will be received by you as a final adjustment of this great question."[†]

It appears that a noble Friend of mine on the cross benches (we believe the Duke of Buckingham) was not satisfied with that declaration. He put the question again respecting the finality of this measure, when my noble Friend (the Earl of Ripon) replied—

"He certainly had not the arrogance to state that any law which Parliament might pass on this subject, or any other, must be taken as final; but there was nothing in that which should be thought threatening to those who might be apprehensive of ulterior consequences from the measure. All he could say for himself was this, that if he brought forward the measure, intending or wishing it not to be final, he would say so. He had never said that with respect to this measure. He hoped it would be final. He thought it would be a good thing if it were: and it would not be his fault if it were not."[‡]

My Lords, my noble Friend, it appears, admits that a large sum of money has been expended on the improvement of land in this country. My Lords, a great deal of money was invested in that way prior to the year 1842; and I am sure that many of your Lordships here present will recollect that that money having been laid out on the faith that protection would be maintained, was one of the main arguments which was adduced to your Lordships, as well as in the other House of Parliament, when Motions were made for the purpose of inquiring into the Corn Laws. Has not that argument been strengthened since 1842? I read the speech of the Minister in the House when the measure was proposed, and it was admitted that a large

capital had been expended on the faith of an Act of Parliament on this laudable and desirable object. Then, my Lords, I ask you, will you now pass this measure? Will you bring in a retrospective law for the confiscation of property? Will you deprive capital of its fair recompense? Will you debar the owner or occupier of the soil from the honest return which his money and skill deserve? Will you prevent him from receiving the fair reward of his industry? Will you, in short, violate the engagement which you formerly made to him under the solemn sanction of an Act of Parliament? My Lords, these men have been of great service to their country. It is a great benefit to the State to have improved the land. The condition of the agricultural labourers has been improved, and the fertility of the soil has been much increased. What does another authority say on this subject?—

"Under the system of protection we have lived for 200 years, extensive tracts of country have been reclaimed, by which the health of the people has been improved, their lives prolonged, and this, too, not at the expense of the manufacturing prosperity, but in concurrence with its wonderful advancement."

I make that quotation, my Lords, because it is so applicable to the present time and to the present moment. But are your Lordships going to remove this system of protection which has so long existed, out of compassion for the condition of the working man and the operatives? I speak of the manufacturing and agricultural labourers generally, for I know that for all you entertain the deepest sympathy. I feel the same sentiments towards both. This part of the subject has been much misrepresented. The evil of protection to the operative has been insisted upon; but I ask your Lordships is there any country where protection does not exist that the following return could be produced? There are at the present moment in the savings banks 1,060,000 accounts of 27*l.* each. There are 600,000 depositors of 7*l.* each; and the total sum so invested in this country that has been "pauperised by protection" amounts to no less than 33,000,000*l.* sterling. I ask your Lordships whether, then, protection has been such an evil as it has been represented? My Lords, I may be forced by a majority to abandon protection, but with such statements before me I can never do so willingly. Never, with such statements, can my reason be convinced that it is a just and a good measure.

^{*} Hansard, Vol. lxii. p. 575.

[†] Hansard, Third Series, Vol. lxii. p. 539.

[‡] Hansard, Third Series, Vol. lxii. p. 752.

My Lords, we are told by the manufacturers, who advocate free trade—no, I should not have said the manufacturers, but a section of the manufacturers—a section, in fact, of the Manchester cotton spinners—they tell us we know nothing of farming—they say “All of you are blockheads; we will take your land from your hands, and bring capital to bear upon it.” They do not say experience, and I wonder they do not—but what do they admit? They admit this, and mark it well: they admit that this change cannot be made without our being called on to remove from our farms 20,000 or 30,000 of the present occupiers. My Lords, they say you must remove them from their present holdings. But what is to become of these poor men? Where are they and their families to go? What will the poor labourers do, who are turned out of employment? Why they must all go to the union workhouse for their daily bread, or they must go, where I suppose the majority of them will go, into the manufacturing districts, and there it will be their lot to serve under those very men who have been the cause of their ruin—the destroyers of all their worldly prospects. My Lords, I know well that the section I allude to, wishes indeed to lower the price of produce in this country; they have adopted a system of hostility against the farmers of England, because they know the farmers have always been sincerely attached to our Constitution and to our institutions. They wish to lower the price of agricultural produce for another reason. They know that thereby they will throw the land out of cultivation—that the agricultural population will be forced into their towns, that competition for labour will be thus increased, and wages permanently lowered. They wish permanently to lower the wages of the operatives, and they wish that, not only that they may get the greater profits themselves, but also for the purpose of effectually preventing those “strikes” which seldom take place when the wages are low. Then I will ask your Lordships what will become of the yeomanry and tenantry who are not ejected? If production be so much diminished, and the poor rates so much increased, what, I ask your Lordships can they do, but linger on a few years? It is, I have no doubt, well known to your Lordships, that in this country, generally speaking, when the prices of produce fall, the poor rates are increased. I have taken the trouble to extract from the Tenth Report of the Poor Law Commis-

sioners; and although that Report does not come lower than 1843, I am prepared to show your Lordships that this has occurred. The noble Duke then read the following document:—

“There is an anomaly in the cost of pauperism to the population as compared with the price of wheat. When wheat was 55s. 3d. per quarter, the cost per head was 5s. 10d.; when wheat was 52s. 4d. per quarter, the cost per head to the population was 6s. 1½d.; showing that with a decreased price of wheat there was an increased cost of pauperism to the population.

“This anomaly is not confined to the St. Thomas Union, it is the same throughout the kingdom, as the following table, extracted from the Tenth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, will prove:—

Years ending Lady-day.	Price of wheat per Quarter.	Rate per head upon the Population (1841) of Expendi- ture for In-mainte- nance and Out- Relief only.
	s. d.	s. d.
1840	08 0	4 8
1841	05 3	4 11
1842	04 0	5 1
1843	54 4	5 5

“If the price of wheat have any influence upon the cost of pauperism, the last year (1843) should have been the lowest, instead of the highest.”

One of the attacks now made by my hon. Friend's new Colleagues of the Anti-Corn-Law League, is, that the British farmers have no capital—no skill. My Lords, I believe there is no country in the world where the farmers are more skilful or more intelligent—more upright—or where they behave better to their poorer neighbours. And, my Lords, I think I am entitled to speak with confidence on this subject, for I believe I am acquainted with more farmers in this kingdom than almost any one in this House. I contradict most emphatically the assertion that they are not skilful; but with respect to their capital, I think it too hard that a Minister should turn round and taunt that large and industrious body of men with having no capital. My Lords, the heavy, unjust, and unequal manner in which they are taxed, coupled with the Currency Bill of 1819, has decidedly diminished their means, and narrowed their circumstances. But if they have not at present sufficient capital—if that be the complaint, how is it you propose to increase the capital which is to be the means of improving their land? Why, by diminishing the value of their produce. Yes, by diminishing the value of their pro-

duce. ["Hear, hear!"] Well, then, if you don't diminish the value of the produce, permit me to tell you you are doing a very dangerous thing, by raising or countenancing the cry of cheap bread. It is a dangerous thing to tell the people the effect of the measure will be to give them cheap bread, should they find it otherwise. I do not feel myself justified in trespassing longer on your Lordships' attention, because I have never for a single moment disguised the strong feeling which I entertain on this great and momentous question; and I think I am also relieved from troubling you, because the great majority of your Lordships think as I do upon this question. I do believe—and I state now what I said on a former occasion—that if a vote on this Bill were taken by ballot in this House, there would not, in my opinion, be a dozen of balls found for Aye. However, there are some of your Lordships who say free trade must come in the end—there is no use in continuing the conflict—it is better to give way at once—there is excitement out of doors. I deny, however, that the great body of the operatives of this country are in favour of the measure. The Anti-Corn-Law League has never ventured to hold a meeting even in Manchester, that hotbed of their own sedition, without having recourse to the ticket system; they were not open meetings; but even if the feeling were much more in favour of this measure than it is pretended it is, it is no argument for the abolition of the Corn Laws, that some noble Lords say, protection must one day or another cease. Why, my Lords, if you once permit such an argument as this to be used, the very best of our laws will be endangered. We never vote against the Government, other noble Lords say, we don't like to vote against the Bill, we have always supported Sir Robert Peel, we don't like to abandon our party. Do not noble Lords know that it is not the party who have abandoned Sir Robert Peel, but it is Sir Robert Peel who has abandoned his party? And, my Lords, what good will it do to come forward to serve Sir Robert Peel now, and lose your own character for consistency? for there is no man in the country who believes that Sir Robert Peel will ever regain the confidence of the great mass of the people. It took that Minister twelve years to regain the confidence of his party after his conduct on the Catholic question in 1829; but he has no more chance of regaining the confidence of the people now,

than he has of sitting upon the Throne of this country. Then, my Lords, I will call your attention to the motives publicly announced out of doors by some of the advocates of free trade. Why, they admit that their object is to crush the aristocracy of this country. One of them, I will not say the most respectable of the Members of the Anti-Corn-Law League, because he certainly is not the most respectable—Mr. Bright—well, Mr. Bright declared openly his desire to crush the aristocracy. I hope and trust your Lordships will all recollect that this is a question of vast importance—that you will remember, that in the eventful time which you must look forward to, it is of the greatest importance that the hereditary legislators of this country have a duty to perform, which they ought to discharge without fear, favour, or affection—that you are bound to lay aside party feelings, personal considerations, and political bias; and that you should vote strictly according to your consciences upon a measure deeply affecting the weal of a large mass of your fellow subjects. It is also incumbent on you to reflect upon consequences, to consider what will be in all likelihood the effect of your sanctioning this measure. Is it expedient? If you concede this, will not other measures be brought forward for destroying the Church—for injuring our institutions—for subverting the constitution of your Lordships' House? If you will act well, you will be indeed powerful, because you stand firm in the good opinion of the great body of the people—of the intelligent middle classes of this country. But I tell your Lordships, with perfect respect, that unless you maintain that good opinion—and you cannot maintain it if the people find you voting against your former promises, your former pledges, your former opinions—you will be then powerless indeed. My Lords, in conclusion I will humbly, though at the same time most earnestly, implore you to vote against this measure, because I believe if you do not reject the measure, it will be accepted only as an instalment for the future—as the commencement of great changes. Influenced by these feelings and by these considerations, I ask you now to take up your post manfully in front of the battle; for, unless you do so, you will hereafter find it impossible to maintain your ground. For myself, my Lords, I vote against the Bill, believing, upon my honour, that it is only the first of a series of such measures—that it is a measure which, if

carried into a law, will shake the very foundations of the Throne, will cripple the Church, endanger our institutions, and convert our hitherto happy and contented people from a state of comparative comfort into one of misery and wretchedness—because I believe that it will lead to endless confusion and anarchy. For these reasons, your Lordships are now called upon to make that stand which I humbly and fervently trust you will.

The Question and Amendment having been put,

EARL FITZWILLIAM said: My noble Friend who has just sat down, read in the conclusion of his speech a formidable list of dangers with which he has threatened your Lordships if you consent to this measure. I think my noble Friend would have done well if he had pointed out with more distinctness the grounds on which he expects that your acquiescence in this measure will lead to those terrible results. I entertain none of these apprehensions. I must deal with the measure, as I think your Lordships will deal with it, as a measure of national policy, without any reference to those fears which my noble Friend has conjured up and nourished in his own mind in order to alarm this House of Parliament. I shall not, therefore, go into any part of the speech of my noble Friend on the cross bench; neither shall I trouble myself with the three-quarters of an hour of apology with which the noble Earl opposite ushered in the measure, on which he barely condescended to bestow the remaining quarter of an hour; though, with respect to that remaining quarter, I cannot but concur with the noble Duke who last addressed you, that we had some right to expect from the Government an explanation of the state of things which, according to their view, called for and would result from the measure they have now proposed. If my memory does not mislead me, my noble Friend on all former occasions—and he is a man of a large experience on these subjects—always condescended to inform the House of Parliament (whichever it was that he was addressing) of the state of things to which he expected his measure would lead. But not so now—he leaps at once to his conclusion, and calls on you “at once,” in one sense, though not “at once” in another, to pass from restriction to free trade—free trade for which I have long contended, but which I hardly thought to have obtained from my noble Friend. I must, however, defend

him from the charge of inconsistency, because I am free to acknowledge that he always, not only now, but on all former occasions on which he has proposed any alterations in the Corn Laws, has avowed himself an enemy to the imposition of a duty on the import of foreign grain. The warfare which I have been so long engaged in is now brought to an end; and I confess it gives me the greatest satisfaction to contemplate the peace and tranquillity which I shall hereafter enjoy. Here is an end of the question: my noble Friend near the Table (Earl Stanhope) may depend upon it that when this measure has passed, not even he will come down to propose a revival of the Corn Law; for, most undoubtedly, although I think it was the duty of the Government to explain to the House the effects they think the measure will produce, I am not one of those who think that it will lead to any disastrous consequences to the landed interests of the country. And, indeed, circumstances have come to my knowledge, even since this measure was introduced into the other House, which prove that no such apprehensions are entertained either by the landed interest in their dealings with their tenants, or by their tenants in their dealings with their landlords. But though I hail with great satisfaction the peace and tranquillity which I anticipate, since I shall be relieved from the necessity of making those Motions with which I have so often troubled your Lordships, nevertheless I must speak my mind frankly upon this subject. I am about to vote for this Bill. I believe it will be carried by a great majority; but I am free to say, that if it had been my lot, on any of those occasions to which I have referred, to have succeeded in inviting your Lordships’ attention to this question, the Bill now before your Lordships is not the one which I should have asked your Lordships to sanction. I am not one of those who deal in language which I think more fit for ancient ladies than grave statesmen, who talk about the cruelty of taxing the necessaries of life. I am not one who believe that there would be anything inhuman in maintaining, even under the pressure of scarcity, a duty on the import of foreign grain. I do not believe that there would be any difficulty in levying that impost. In this respect, therefore, I disapprove of the present Bill, because I think we have thrown away a large revenue which we might have raised, and which you must replace by other taxes, either to be continued or imposed—I say,

either to be continued or imposed, because under even that system of law which having been condemned by the House of Commons, and which I now anticipate will be equally condemned by your Lordships, I may venture to call an absurd system, a large revenue has been raised. The other House must find a substitute for the revenue which they have lost; where it is to be found I know not, whether from an increase of the Income Tax or of the Excise duties, if the Excise duties can be further extended. It so happened that when I was first made acquainted with this proposed measure, I was at a great distance from this country. I heard, then, that it was said in the House of Commons that Gentlemen were not to look at the repeal of the Corn Law as an insulated measure, but that they must look at it in connexion with other measures, and they would thus see what would be given by way of compensation. Now I, who do not expect that the landed interest will suffer from this measure, do not think that much compensation is required; but others view it in a very different light. When, therefore, I heard of compensation, undoubtedly I thought, and not a very unnatural thought, that as there was to be an end of what had been considered a great boon to the landed interest, some benefit would be conferred on it instead. I was told abroad that the whole system must be viewed together, and I consequently thought there would have been a total revision of the taxation of the country—not that there would have been a new Customs Tariff (for that is a different thing), but a complete revision of the Excise Laws; and I fancied, in the sanguineness of my expectations, that it would just be possible that Her Majesty's Ministers, who thought so little of mere revenue, that the loss of 500,000*l.*, or 600,000*l.*, or 700,000*l.* raised on foreign corn was of no importance, would have proposed at least a diminution, if not the entire repeal, of the malt tax. I certainly expected something of that sort, and I think that that would have been a large and comprehensive compensation for those who thought compensation necessary. I know not whether all agree with me in this; perhaps my noble Friend (Lord Montague) does not—but my noble Friend has been Chancellor of the Exchequer, and like all Chancellors of the Exchequer has his own peculiar idol—but for myself I certainly thought that the landed interest had just reason to expect a great diminution, if not an entire repeal, of this tax. I consider

the malt tax to be a tax which weighs most oppressively upon the landowners of this country. I know it to be most unequal, and I regard it also as an unnecessary tax. I know that in the main it is a tax upon the consumer; and I think, when we are untaxing the consumer's bread, that we should also untax his beer. But I think that this tax is a sort of Janus—that it has two faces—that it looks behind as well as before—and that in reality it not only taxes the consumer, but also the owners and the occupiers of the land; especially the latter class; because, perhaps of all persons, the occupiers of land and those in their employ are the greatest consumers of that article, which they are prevented by this unequal impost from manufacturing even for their own use. I am aware that the giving up of this tax would involve a large addition to other imposts; but I am favourable to such a course. I think that the income tax should be abolished; but I should wish to see a large addition to the property tax—not to the old land tax, because that is done away with—but to taxation on the real property of the country. But, my Lords, there is another point in which I exceedingly disapprove of this Bill; and I am astonished, except it be for the purpose of maintaining a paltry rag, the smallest remnant of consistency, that we are to have a little bit of a sliding scale kept up for three years to come. What on earth can be the use of it? I speak, I may almost say, as a witness upon this subject; for I have taken pains to ascertain the feeling of the agriculturists in the counties with which I am connected, and I believe that the almost universal desire is for an immediate settlement of this question. I have always been of opinion, and I have ever stated it with confidence, that when you began to deal with the Corn Laws, you should decide in your own minds what the state of the law should be, and that you should come to that state at once. I have always opposed the gradual abolition system. It may be a system favourable perhaps to the landlord; but it is most injurious to the tenant; for in every bargain that might be made during the currency of this protection, a great advantage would be given to the landlord over the tenant. For this reason, had it been my lot to have proposed a law upon this subject, I should have proposed a different one from that which is now before your Lordships. As it is, I am not surprised at the indignation which the Bill has excited. Unfortunately

it seems to me as if there had been a sort of race—a kind of St. Leger or Derby—in this matter. The First Lord of the Treasury got ahead upon this occasion, he determined to take advantage of it, and he has gone for the full measure. Well, inasmuch as it gets rid of the question, I rejoice at it; but I do think that it is one of which your Lordships have reason to complain. I disapprove of it, but I must vote for it. I am driven into that course, and there is no help for it; because I must either vote for this Bill, which is a money Bill, or I must run the risk of losing the measure for this year, and perhaps of losing it more permanently. I value the abolition of the Corn Laws too much to run even the slightest risk of such an event. I perhaps ought not to say what I am going to say, but certain noble Lords have said to me, "Will your Lordship help us?" My Lords, I was obliged to say "No," I can give you no help: you never helped me, and you have therefore no right to ask me to help you. I do not know that my assistance would have been worth much, even if I had been willing; but I could not give it consistently with the great object which I have in view in the condemnation of these laws. I think however that this House has much reason to complain of the Government. I ask Her Majesty's Ministers why, in propounding a measure of this magnitude—and which must have been proposed to the surprise of all your Lordships—why they proposed it in such a way as precludes all your Lordships from making any amendment in the measure? I repeat, was such a course either right or decent? They may say that they had no other course; but that is not the fact. They had another course. It is in accordance with precedent that in measures of this great importance Resolutions should have been moved in the other House, and should have been communicated to this House in the first instance. I think that would have been the proper course for Her Majesty's Ministers to have pursued. Your Lordships could then have entered into a full consideration of the measure in conjunction with the other House. You might have stated your views, and might have negotiated with them; but now, the ground is cut from you, and you cannot enter into any such negotiation. The smallest accident to this Bill loses it, and I am not one who will run such a risk. Adopting, not the opinions of the noble Duke on the cross bench, but adopting all

the views which he expresses with respect to the conduct of the Government upon this question, I feel necessarily precluded from acting in any other manner than I am about to do. I implore your Lordships not to resist this great measure; and this appeal I make not only to those who agree with me in wishing to set it at rest for ever, but to those also who think that the existing laws should be maintained as being calculated to maintain the best interests of this country. Whatever opinion you may entertain upon this question, there is one point on which you can entertain but one opinion, and that is, that if you reject this Bill, you prolong that conflict of opinion, and that contest for a repeal of these laws, which has been so mischievous to every class of society, and from which, give me leave to say, no class has reaped such bitter fruits as the agricultural interests of this country.

The DUKE OF CLEVELAND said, he was unwilling to give a silent vote upon this measure, and he must therefore trouble their Lordships for a short time. He had long placed the greatest confidence in the political integrity of the Minister who had brought forward this measure, whether in or out of office; and it was, therefore, with no ordinary feelings that he found himself compelled on this occasion to sever himself from a Government which he had always hitherto endeavoured to support. For the head of that Government he had ever entertained the highest respect; and he had always entertained the same feeling for the noble Duke (the Duke of Wellington), from whom he was now compelled to separate. This change had arisen from no whim and no caprice on his part. It was occasioned by what he considered to be a total abandonment of all principle on the part of the Government. He had had a correspondence with the noble Duke at the commencement of the year 1843, when that noble Duke had the kindness to offer to him the moving of the Address in the House of Lords in answer to the Queen's Speech. Agreeing with the Government in all its principles, he felt complimented by this offer; but then there was one circumstance of which he could not avoid taking notice. There was then a rumour that it was the intention of the Government to make a material alteration in the Corn Bill, which had only been brought in the year before. He communicated this to the noble Duke, and asked his permission to be allowed to declare that the ru-

monr was not only unfounded, but that, as far as the present Government was concerned, the measure was to be regarded as final. To that request the noble Duke said he could not accede, as it would be allowing a greater license than usual; and he therefore declined moving the Address. He had now to observe that when this Bill was first brought into this House, the noble Duke (the Duke of Richmond) had drawn a distinction between private and political honour; and the noble Earl (the Earl of Ripon) said he would not admit of such a distinction. He agreed with the noble Earl on that point; but if consistency was to be comprised in political honour, he must say, that after the statement made that night, and after the extracts which the noble Duke had read of speeches made by his noble Friend on former occasions, his noble Friend could not be quoted as an example. As to the measure then before the House, he thought it unprecedented for its boldness, as it was dangerous in its application, and sudden in the mode of its introduction. It was a dangerous and a hazardous experiment. If it did not succeed it was an irreparable evil; for whatever its consequences might be, they must remember that they could never retrace their steps. It was a measure conceded to agitation by a Government, which agitation ought to have been suppressed by the Government, if the Government were determined upon doing its duty. Let it be admitted that there ought to be a protecting duty on grain; yet it might be said that protecting duty was too high—that it was higher than on other articles of British manufacture. Still he said, admitting that, the question ought to be asked, why was it so high? and the answer was, simply in consideration of the heavy burdens and taxes imposed upon land which prevent our farmers competing with foreigners on equal terms. He had often said, both in and out of Parliament, that let their tithes and poor rates be equalized—let them bear but the same proportion with other parts of the community, and then the land would not require a higher protection than any other domestic interest in the country. The noble Earl (Fitzwilliam) who had just sat down, had referred to the compensations that had been promised to the agricultural interests, and had said the measures ought to be taken as a whole. There could be no doubt that the Premier had promised certain concessions to the agriculturists, and he had said they were

to be embodied in this Bill; but their Lordships were well aware there was no such thing. He felt that there was a great deal of complication in the arrangements proposed by the Government; but as they boasted of being able to overcome every difficulty, he felt it was for them to extricate themselves from the labyrinth as they best could. He would now allude to the concessions which had been promised, which he could only gather from the Prime Minister in his speech, and which formed portions of the Tariff. The first concession was a reduction of the duty upon linseed, from which the farmers were promised great benefits. Now, as to the main sufferers, the small farmers, there was scarcely one of them that used oil cake; they could not afford it, and therefore the reduction would be of very little service to them. The next compensation consisted in the free introduction of clover-seed; but the farmers of this country generally grew their own clover, and they would not be materially relieved in that way. The next reduction was that in the duty on French brandy. He could state that when the small farmers—in that part of the country, at least, with which he was best acquainted—brought their produce for sale on market day, and drank their brandy and water, very few of them knew that there was any brandy imported from France. What they drank was a British compound, very much resembling French brandy in colour, but having no other of its attributes; and he believed that a repeal of the duty levied upon French brandy would not be of the least use to English farmers. There might be other articles upon which concessions were made, but these were all that he was aware of as being made to the British farmer; and if these compensations amounted to nothing, so much the more oppressive would be the measure which was now under their Lordships' consideration. Well, if this was the case, this measure was the cruellest, the most oppressive, and the most injurious that had ever been attempted to be passed by a Legislature against an industrious, a loyal, and an independent class of men—a measure adopted in order to oppress them with a view to benefit another class who were notorious for their disloyalty, turbulence, and discontent. If this measure had emanated from any Member of the late Government, he should not have been in the least surprised, because in proposing it they would have been doing nothing more than acting

in accordance with the principles upon which they had hitherto acted, and for acting upon which he gave them the greatest possible credit, because they had always been perfectly consistent; and he very well remembered that the very last notice of a Motion which Lord J. Russell gave when leader of the Government was for a fixed duty of 8s. a quarter upon wheat, and a proportionate reduction upon other descriptions of grain. He remembered very well that that notice was literally scouted by every side of the House—not only by the Members of the Conservative party, but by a great number of Whig Members, who had always supported the measures of that Government. But there was no one more loud against the proposition than the present First Lord of the Treasury himself; and the immediate consequence of the notice was, that on the following day the right hon. Gentleman assembled at his house a small number of his political associates, of whom he (the Duke of Cleveland) had the honour at the time of being one, and consulted them as to what was best to be done to save the country from so dire a calamity. Other noble Lords, now in that House, were also present at that meeting. His noble Friend on his left was one—the present Postmaster General he believed was present—the late Postmaster General he knew was. And what was the result of the deliberations then held? It was that Sir R. Peel himself should give notice of a Motion of want of confidence in the existing Government. That Motion he did make in a very able speech, as he always did, but he rested his case chiefly, if not entirely, upon two points: the first was the alteration of the Sugar duties, which had already been brought before the House, and upon which the Government had been beaten by a very large majority; the other was the alteration in the Corn Laws to a fixed duty instead of the sliding scale. He need hardly remind their Lordships of the issue of that struggle. After four or five nights' debate the Motion was carried by a majority of one in the largest House perhaps that had ever divided. The numbers were 310 on one side, and 311 on the other, which, with the four tellers, made 625; the largest House, he believed, that had ever come to a division in the House of Commons. It might be assumed that his (the Duke of Cleveland's) vote was the one that had turned the scale; but although he had done this, and it might be very fair for those who disagreed with him to find fault

with him for doing so, yet he challenged any one to prove that, in the course of his political life—not a very short one—he had ever given any two votes, the one of which was in direct contradiction to the other, or ever given one vote which was not dictated by the purest and most conscientious conviction. He knew it might very fairly be said, "When you gave that vote, do you deny that it was given for a party object—for the purpose of dislodging one Government and placing another in its room?" In one sense he gave a frank admission that the vote was a party vote. He had been a party man all his life. He did not think it was derogatory to any man to belong to a party. On the contrary, he thought it was the bounden duty of every man who took an interest in public affairs to attach himself to a party, as the only means by which the views he entertained could be carried out. But although he had always belonged to a party, it must be remembered that he had not always belonged to the same party. He had stated the course he had taken on the occasion in question; but, although he had given that vote at the time for the purpose of displacing one Government, and putting another in lieu of it, he assured their Lordships with the utmost sincerity it was not because the name of the leader of one party was Peel, and that of the other Russell, that he did so, but because he approved of the principles advocated by the one, and consequently thought those of the other detrimental to the interests of the country. But at the same time, if he could have foreseen that the same Minister who had always up to that period advocated protection to agriculture with so much ability, and held it up as the keystone of our Conservative policy—if he could have imagined that within five years that same leader would abandon all those principles, he would sooner have cut off his right hand than have given that vote. Even since the meeting of Parliament and the introduction of this measure, he confessed the late speeches of the Prime Minister, as reported, had filled him with astonishment. Although he had paid great attention to the right hon. Gentleman's speeches, and acknowledged the ability of his arguments, he must say that he could not discover the slightest justification for the policy he was now pursuing. No doubt the right hon. Gentleman had brought forward able arguments in support of a repeal of the Corn Laws; but they were the very same ar-

guments which had been heard for years from Mr. Villiers and Mr. Cobden, and which the right hon. Baronet had then so strenuously and so zealously opposed. This being the case, he could not see what sudden new light had broken in upon the right hon. Gentleman. Let their Lordships recollect that the present Corn Bill, which was only of four years' standing, was of the right hon. Gentleman's own bringing in, and was intended at the time, as had been stated by the noble Earl who moved the second reading of this Bill, to be final. Every one imagined so. He thought it an improvement on the existing law. The right hon. Baronet, before he introduced the Bill, was kind enough (he was sure he did not know for what reason)—he was kind enough, before the Session commenced, to send him (the Duke of Cleveland) a rough draft of the Bill, and to ask his opinion and approval of it. He had no hesitation in saying that he did highly approve of it. Many of his friends disagreed with him; and his noble Friend behind him (the Duke of Buckingham) threw up his seat in the Cabinet in consequence. He thought his noble Friend wrong in doing so; but after what had since occurred he gave his noble Friend credit for more penetration than he (the Duke of Cleveland) possessed, and now felt that his noble Friend was right and he was wrong. Although he had received a draft of the former Bill, he need hardly say that he had been favoured with no perusal of this. He did not complain of this on his own account; but he thought that before they introduced a great measure like this—making a total change in the policy of the Government—it was the duty of that Government to have assembled their friends, to have informed them of it; and, if they had strong and powerful reasons—as he supposed they had—for enforcing such a measure, to have put their friends in both Houses of Parliament in possession of those reasons, and not to have betrayed them in the manner they had done. What were the objects of this Bill? Their Lordships were told that the right hon. Baronet, with those plausible arguments of which he was so able a master, had converted many landowners who had entertained opinions opposite to his own; that he had made converts of them, and induced them to adopt his opinions. He (the Duke of Cleveland) did not find fault with any man's opinions, nor had he a right to do so; but he wished to

impress upon their Lordships that, however many classes might suffer by this Bill, the great and wealthy landowners would not be the greatest sufferers. The small landowners—the country gentlemen—would be greater sufferers; and there was a still more important class, the yeomanry, who were justly considered the pride and honour of England; those who had about 300*l.* a year in land, whose whole sources of income were drawn from the land; who lived upon their farms and cultivated them themselves—they would suffer still more severely. Whatever reduction might take place in the value of agricultural produce—whether 20 or 30 per cent.—the loss would fall upon the yeomanry most heavily; in short, it would almost annihilate them as a body. The next large class of society that would be severely injured were the tenant farmers. He had frequently heard it said—but the argument was so absurd that it would not be used by their Lordships or by any one who understood the management of land—that this was a landlord's question, and not a tenant's; that the rate of price would not affect the tenants if the rents were reduced in a similar proportion. Those who used this argument had no reflection, or they did not know the fact, that in South Britain the agreement between landlord and tenant was universal—in North Britain it was not so; but throughout the whole of South Britain the tenant, when he entered upon his farm, paid every charge except the landlord's property tax, and that he paid in the first instance, but was allowed to deduct it from his rent. He had all the expenses of labour and cultivation, was obliged to incur the risk of diseases in his live stock—to sustain the losses arising from failures produced by unfavourable weather and other causes. When all expenses were paid, the surplus profit was divided in two parts between the landlord and the tenant. Now what was the general rate of rents in these cases? He did not exaggerate the argument when he said that no landlord received more than one-fourth of the gross produce: few received so much; but he would take it at one-fourth. Suppose a farm at the rent of 300*l.* a year: the gross produce of such a farm would be 1,200*l.* a year; suppose the reduction in the value of that produce by the operation of this Bill to be 20 per cent. By this reduction, the landlord's rent would be diminished from 300*l.* to 240*l.*; but the other 900*l.* was the pro-

party of the tenant, and consequently the reduction of 20 per cent. would leave him only 720*l.* instead of 900*l.*, so that the tenant lost 180*l.*, while the landlord lost only 60*l.* He would ask them whether this was more a landlord's or a tenant's question? He would now come to a very deserving class, and the one which was the most numerous of all, he meant the agricultural labourers. What was to become of the thousands, the tens of thousands, nay he might say the hundreds of thousands, who must be thrown out of employment, at least on the poor soils, which could not be cultivated under the operation of this Bill. Let their Lordships bear in mind the peculiar tie that exists between the occupiers of land and the labourers—a kind of contract which subsists in no other case between employer and employed. Their Lordships were aware that a journeyman tailor, for instance, works this year for one master, another year for another; so also a journeyman shoemaker, and others of that description. But the agricultural labourer is rooted to the soil; he has never worked for any but the one master; he works for him from year to year, and there is a tie between them—a bond of amity and affection, which is to be found in no other class. This tie would be broken if the measure should operate as he expected. In the first place, the small landowners, of whom there were great numbers, in order to save expense, must live on the Continent. The labourers who had hitherto been looked upon as heirs-looms on the property, must be swept away. Then with respect to the tenant occupier, where he would retain labourers, he must, in order to reduce his expenditure, diminish the number. Necessity would oblige him to do so. What was to be the resource of all the poor people thus dismissed? They were told, that in proportion as the land was thrown out of cultivation, factory mills would be increased in number, to give employment to the surplus population. He implored their Lordships to pause before they passed so fatal a decree as this displacement of agricultural labour. He hoped they would look at the consequences that must flow from it; he trusted they would contrast the condition of the agricultural labourer at present with what it must be if this Bill passed. He was, as it were, fixed upon the one property. He passed his life in humble, but, nevertheless, independent circumstances: living in the bosom of his family, he exercised his daily

toil amidst the sweetness of a salubrious air, and wholesome atmosphere. Look at him after this measure should have passed, and see him condemned to pass his life in a crowded building, in a pernicious atmosphere, healthy and sick, strong and weak, huddled together, never beholding the light of day; but living from morning till night in a dense fog, and a pestilential air. Having troubled their Lordships with these three classes belonging to the land, he should not go into detail with respect to other classes which were in a great measure dependent on it for their subsistence; but he would shortly mention some of them. There were the small shopkeepers in country towns, the artisans, and various others, who derived almost the whole of their subsistence from the owners and occupiers of land; but after them came a class of a superior description, and whom he maintained to be not altogether unworthy of their Lordships' consideration, when they reflected upon the nature of their calling, the respectability of their station in life, and the alms which they were bound to distribute, and did distribute, among the poorer members of their flocks—he meant the parochial clergy. No class would suffer more than they would; and he hoped the right rev. Prelates would consider their interests, and protect them from the operation of this measure. He looked upon the parochial clergy as the greatest sufferers from this measure, because the landholders could, by skilful farming and improved modes of cultivation, increase the produce of the soil. By the former law, the clergy would share in the benefit of that increase; but by this they would be precluded from doing so, because in their ease while the quantity was fixed the price would vary. And now he must ask, what was to be the upshot of all this, and what were really the views of the Government? Did they really think that by such a measure as this, they would put an end to all the agitation? Did they suppose that this Bill would for ever shut the mouths of the Cobdens and the Brights? That measure could be considered in no other light than as a stepping-stone to ulterior measures; he had no hesitation in saying that the next point of attack would be the Irish Church. Considering that on that measure Her Majesty's Ministers were not acting according to their own desire—considering that they had yielded to clamour—what security had their Lordships that they would resist a clamour which might, nay which would,

be got up against the Irish Church? And after that was gone, would not the English Church be attacked also? There were many persons even now who advocated the voluntary system: that was a feeling which would not diminish. He contended that if that measure were passed, many years would not pass by before they would see the demolition of both the one and the other. Entertaining such views, on which he had ventured such predictions, he conjured their Lordships to pause before they gave their assent to a measure which was sure to be followed by such consequences. The House of Lords had always stood high in the estimation of the people; it had at all times been believed to be an independent body; the support which had been given by particular Members of it to a Minister, had originated in no interested motives, either with a view to official employment or from seeking any of the honours or distinctions in the power of the Crown to grant; and as such had been the character of their Lordships' House, he trusted that that character would now be maintained. They all knew that an old building, not far from their Lordships' House, was much infested with a description of vermin which were denominated rats; he trusted the noxious animal would never be seen running across their Lordships' floor. He had to apologize to their Lordships for occupying so much of their time. If he had inadvertent too strongly upon the conduct of any of his noble Friends, he could assure them that he had not done so with a view to give offence; nothing was farther from his intention; but placed as he was in the position of an independent Member of their Lordships' House, he would endeavour upon all occasions to do that which he considered his duty; and that, in his opinion, was so to vote as to advance those interests which were best for the country at large, and for the benefit of the whole community, and with those feelings he would give his vote for the Amendment of his noble Friend.

The MARQUESS OF LONDONDERRY apologized for his rising to address the House at the same time with the noble Earl (Fitzwilliam), but he confessed he felt anxious to address their Lordships after the speech of his noble Friend the noble Duke; and he felt in a manner called upon to do so, because they were inhabitants of the same county, and were in some degree connected with the great interests of that county. He had not had the good fortune to be in the House when

the noble Duke presented the petition from the county of Durham; but he might in a few words state what he was sure his noble Friend would admit, that the meeting at which that petition was voted, was held before there was any explanation by Her Majesty's Government of the course which the Prime Minister intended to pursue, and it was only attended by the landowners and occupiers in and around Durham; but the petition was afterwards handed round the county for signature, and the total number of signatures obtained, after all, was between 2,300 and 2,600. Now, the county of Durham comprised 12,000 registered farmers and freeholders in the two divisions of the county, being about 7,000 in the one county, and 5,000 in the other; and seeing that 2,300 was all they could get to sign the petition, he had no fears that even if a dissolution of Parliament were come to, there would be four protectionist Members returned for the county, or that there would be a single protectionist Member for either of the two divisions. He believed that the general feeling in the north of England was in favour of this measure, and that the farmers there entertained very different views from what were entertained in the south. He would not pretend to the same acquaintance with the farmers of the kingdom as the noble Duke (Richmond); but he might state, that even after Sir Robert Peel had proposed his measure, he called upon a farmer, a friend of his, in Stockton-on-Tees, and asked him what he thought of the scheme? He said, "Oh, my Lord, I am quite satisfied!" He (Lord Londonderry) asked him what he meant, and he replied, "I am satisfied it will be for our benefit, for the farmers must now grow two blades of grass where before they grew only one." With regard to the question before them, he admitted that it was one of immense importance, of great embarrassment, and of great difficulty. He felt that it was an experiment—that it was a great experiment; but having given his confidence to a Ministry who had already carried the country through so many difficulties—who had succeeded to the situations of noble Lords opposite, and with their situations had succeeded to a revenue which did not meet the expenditure, which they had most successfully remedied—when he found that the foreign affairs of the country were administered by a noble Friend of his, who discharged his duties to the general satisfaction of the country, and, he believed, of

all Europe—when he found that all the other departments of the State, as well as the Army and Navy, were carried on in the most efficient and triumphant manner—when he found that all this was the case, he was at a loss to know why he should change his opinion of the Government, and put himself in direct opposition to them on a question which, after all, he maintained, was more a question of rent-roll and of profit, than one concerning those high principles of policy on which this country should be governed. They found that there were now Whig protectionists and Whig free traders, and Conservative protectionists and Conservative free traders, so that, in fact, it was not a question of party at all, or of one on which were ranged on one side those connected with the interests of agriculture, and those connected with commerce and manufactures on the other. It was unfortunate that they should be brought into such a situation as this, because it was difficult, from the exaggerated statements made on both sides, to form a deliberate judgment on the question. He felt he must admit that he was incompetent to follow the noble Duke through the whole of his able statements; but, for himself, he must say that he generally took, where he was not able to form an opinion of his own, the opinions of those with whom he generally acted in public life. He found that those individuals—one and all of them—who had carried the country through a dangerous crisis, had all found it expedient to change the opinions which they had formerly held. But change was no matter of reproach to any man. If change was to be made matter of reproach, let them look at the last division in their Lordships' House on this question. The noble Earl (Earl Fitzwilliam) stated that he believed this measure would be carried by a very large majority; but how many of their Lordships had ever voted for it before? Why the largest number of their Lordships who had ever before voted for the total repeal of the Corn Laws was only six. So after that, and considering that a majority was now to vote in its favour, he thought there could be no accusation on the subject of change. The noble Duke who had moved the Amendment, he regretted to say, had been a little personal. He had turned to the conduct of his noble Friend the President of the Board of Control, and by an industrious searching of *Hansard*, he had got up a considerable number of his

noble Friend's speeches made at former periods, and he had quoted them as if they proved a great triumph over his noble Friend. But there were some not very small changes in the noble Duke's own opinions; and if he were to look up *Hansard* with equal industry, he thought he should be able to make out as good a case against the noble Duke—he would perhaps be prepared to do so at another time. [The Duke of Richmond: I challenge the noble Earl.] There had lately been some very sudden changes in public characters; military men and sportsmen were about to become statesmen; but he doubted if they would ever succeed the noble Earl against whom and whose Colleagues they were so fiercely inveighing; and if they did, he should put a question once asked by the noble Duke (the Duke of Wellington), viz., "How is the Queen's Government to be carried on?" Was there not in 1829 the same clamour? Was there not, then, the same sweeping charge of change of opinion? And what had been the consequence? Why, the country applauded and proved their approbation of the statesmen implicated in that change; and if next year Sir Robert Peel could point to his Tariff and to the revenue, and could show that his experiment had succeeded, would not the clamour now raised cease? Let them give to this experiment a fair trial, and let them, until the result proved they had trusted without reason, continue their confidence in the Minister who had brought the country to a state of unprecedented prosperity. The noble Duke had finished his speech with a prophecy; but in entertaining these fears for the future, the noble Duke must be supposing that his (the Marquess of Londonderry's) noble Friends who acted with Sir Robert Peel would become parties to the future changes. Sir Robert Peel had, himself, on the 27th or 28th of March, declared, after expressing his sense of the aid given by the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) and other Members of the Opposition, in passing the measure, that on its passing, his opinions and his policy would be as distinct and as widely separate as ever from the noble Lord's. This was a very strong proof that the right hon. Gentleman did not, in bringing forward the measure, which he thought essential, in any way alter the principles by which heretofore he had been guided. He had none of the fears expressed by the noble Duke; and he, for one, would never give his support to the Ministry which proposed such changes as those

referred to. He was firmly persuaded, in regard to the Corn Laws, that every Prime Minister since Lord Liverpool had, in his conscience, felt that the time must eventually arrive when those laws would have to be repealed. The gradual relaxations in their restrictive legislation had been, in each instance, succeeded by a prosperity greater than before, and these results justified him in the vote which he would now give for a still further relaxation. He did not think that any of the evil consequences predicted would follow upon the alteration; and, as to his own country—Ireland—he was convinced no injury would be felt there. He had already stated his opinions on the subject of the scarcity in Ireland. He defended the right hon. Baronet for having availed himself of the circumstance: if the object to be attained was the good of the country he was right to avail himself of anything that occurred; an able general would do the same. He did not believe that the measure would be attended by all the mischiefs the noble Duke (the Duke of Richmond) had enumerated, and which appeared to have frightened him, and if the measure was allowed due and effective operation, he thought those who were now so vociferous in condemning the right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government, would again return to his standard for shelter. He had long sailed in the right hon. Baronet's boat; if it was sinking, he would be the last person to desert it. He would stand by him still in perfect confidence, believing that, even if he should be overthrown by the combination of parties, he would recover the fall again.

LORD STANLEY: My Lords, I can assure your Lordships that it is with the most unfeigned distrust of my own powers, but at the same time with the most unhesitating conviction of the truth and strength of the case which I have to support, that I venture to submit myself to your Lordships' indulgence while I enter into a defence of that system of law which has been designated by a noble Earl on the other side of the House as absurd, and which has been most vehemently, but I can hardly say vigorously, assailed by those who have hitherto boldly and most strenuously defended it; and who were indeed among the principal framers of the existing Act. I feel, my Lords, how much need I have of your indulgence; because I find myself, unhappily, on this occasion, opposed, *impar congressus*, to all those who have been hitherto the leaders of both

the great parties into which this House and the other House of Parliament have been divided. But, however much and however painfully I may feel the inequality of the contest in point of ability, I cannot admit that the weight of authority is in favour of those who propose the abolition of the Corn Laws. My Lords, I will not appeal—it would be invidious to do so—to the authority of the present against the former opinions of noble Lords on either side of the House. I will not cite the opinions they may have formed, or the expressions they may have made use of; but, my Lords, I will venture to appeal from the authority of the living to the authority of the dead—I will venture to appeal from the authority of the statesmen of the present day to all the great names among those who have been the most liberal commercial Ministers of England in times not long gone past; I will appeal to the authority of Chatham, to the authority of Mr. Pitt, to the authority of Mr. Huskisson; and, my Lords, while I mention their names, I will refer to those of others whose eloquence still rings in our ears—and would to God their wisdom and prudence were still directing our councils!—trusting I shall be forgiven by three of my noble Friends who now occupy seats in this House if I cite in opposition to their opinions the authority of those who first cast imperishable lustre on the names of Liverpool, of Canning, and of Grey. But I can appeal not only to statesmen of almost the present day—I can appeal against the statesmen of the present year to the authority of all those who have swayed the destinies of this country ever since it took a prominent place among the nations of the world. The noble Earl (Earl Ripon) says this question was not raised by former Governments on the principle of protection; I say, that if you search the records of our history from the earliest times, you will find in the most distinct form, with the preambles of successive statutes in successive ages, that the principle which guided the Ministers of this country was, the principle of encouraging the domestic industry and protecting the agriculture of this country. As early as the time of Edward IV., I recollect a memorable preamble, one which might almost be applied to a statute of the present day: it recites, if I remember the words, "That whereas the labourers and occupiers in husbandry"—not the great owners of land, observe, not the great proprietors—but "the labourers and occupiers in husbandry, be daily grievously endamaged

by the bringing in from foreign countries of corn into this realm when the price of corn within this realm is low;" and the statute, after that recital, goes on to prohibit the importation of corn when the price here was 6s. 8d. per quarter. The same principle has guided the Legislature of this country from that day to the present, varied according to the circumstances of the country, varied according to the exigencies of the time, varied according to the state of husbandry, and the state of our relations with foreign Powers. But through all, without an exception, there has been maintained this principle—that in order to secure the independency of this country of foreign supplies for the food of its own people, it was the policy of this great country to give encouragement and protection to the cultivation of its own soil. But I will not be satisfied with appealing to home authorities; there is not one nation in the world of any eminence that has ventured, up to this hour, upon the bold and rash experiment upon which your Lordships are invited to enter, of leaving the provision of the food of its people unrestrained by legislation, unprotected by fiscal regulation, and subject to mere chance, or worse than that—to chance controllable and controlled by the caprice, the enmity, or the inability to supply, of foreign countries. I will go through the principal nations of the earth. France and Holland have both not only a system of protection, but both have a sliding scale, and France has a sliding scale infinitely more complicated and stringent than our own. Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, the Germanic Confederation, Prussia, Portugal, Spain, the Roman States, Austria, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, and the United States of America. Have I gone through all the principal nations of the world? Not one of all these countries has ventured to leave its agriculture unprotected, or to allow the provision of the food of its people to be dependent on foreigners. And when I see all this, not only can I not admit that the weight of authority is with the opponents of the measure, but I venture to doubt the truth of that which has been put forward as an indisputable axiom—that the *primâ facie* inference is in favour of unrestricted free trade. On the contrary, I think the weight of authority—the authority of the past and the present, of this and of all other countries, nations with every variety of soil and climate, with every variety of density and sparseness of

population, under all varieties of civil institutions, from the most absolute monarchy to the most unrestricted republicanism—the combined authority of all times and countries, is in favour of the system of protection. I dispute that which has been held to be an indisputable axiom; and I contend that the inference, the *primâ facie* inference, is, that all statesmen of former times in this country and all other countries at the present day, have not been wholly destitute of political wisdom and political sagacity. I cannot believe that not a single beam of enlightenment dispelled the universal darkness, till that which flashed simultaneously and with such marvellous power of conversion upon the statesmen of the present age, in the month of November last. I hope I need not assure your Lordships, and I am quite confident I need not assure the noble and gallant Duke near me (the Duke of Wellington), that however deeply I may deplore the course he has pursued as a Minister of the Crown, no words shall fall from me in the course of the observations I shall have to offer, in the slightest degree inconsistent with the deep personal respect I entertain both for his public and private character, or tending to cast the shadow of a suspicion—which does not exist or find a place in my mind—upon the entire purity of the motives by which he has been actuated. Even if my noble Friend's brilliant career and the pre-eminent position he occupies in this age and country, did not place him—I will not say beyond criticism—but above the apprehension of censure, the uniform single-mindedness of his character, his utter forgetfulness on all occasions of self, and his abhorrence of all that is low, mean, and selfish, would be a guarantee to your Lordships and to the world, that, whatever be the circumstances which have produced it, his decision has been formed upon a sincere, but, I respectfully think, a mistaken sense of what is best for the public interest. Nor, my Lords, will I presume to doubt the sincerity of the conviction of my right hon. Friend at the head of Her Majesty's Government, that this measure was called for by a great exigency. A man of far less sagacity and experience than my right hon. Friend could not have failed to foresee that the inevitable consequence of this measure must be the dislocation and disruption of all those party ties without which, in my humble judgment, the affairs of this great country can never be steadily or safely con-

duced; he must have foreseen the shock it would give to public confidence in public men, to the confidence of constituents in their representatives, to the confidence of the country in the House of Commons, and, forgive me for saying so, in your Lordships' House also, if you should unhappily imitate the too facile conversion of the other branch of the Legislature. He must have known the embarrassment, the painful conflict and struggle between personal attachment and public principle, to which it would expose his warmest and most devoted adherents; he must have felt the injury he was doing to his own public reputation, and the diminution he was causing of his own means of future usefulness; I believe my right hon. Friend foresaw all these circumstances, and therefore I cannot but think that he conscientiously believed the emergency of the case required this course to be pursued. But I think my right hon. Friend fatally and unhappily mistook the character of that emergency, that he mistook the real judgment of the country. I think he committed the error the most fatal a statesman can commit—I think he mistook the brawling torrent of agitation for the still, deep current of public opinion. And it will not be the least unhappy consequence of this unhappy measure that this country and the world will believe—truly or falsely, justly or unjustly, I will not say—that a triumph has been gained by an organized and interested association over the Minister of the Crown; and that a still more fatal triumph has been gained by the Minister of the Crown, acting under the influence of that association, over his political supporters and the independence of Parliament. With these observations I dismiss all that is personal with regard to this question. I will not be tempted to enter into personal motives even by that general panegyric of inconsistency which has been pronounced by the noble Marquess (the Marquess of Londonderry). But I must, in passing, express my regret that the noble Marquess should have thought it becoming in him to cast a taunt upon those able, zealous, and conscientious men, who, abandoned by those in whom they formerly placed their confidence, have been put forward in an unwonted struggle, and in that struggle have exhibited ability, talent, and courage which only reflect the greater credit upon them, because, for a long period of time—as long as they could confide in those who formerly led them—they had modestly kept those

talents concealed from public view. I say I will not enter upon personal considerations. I will not expose myself to the sort of attack intimated by the noble Marquess; I will not quote a single page of *Hansard*—I will not go back to one previous opinion or one previous speech; I do not desire to appeal to your Lordships' passions, but to your reason; I do not desire to aggravate the feelings of mortification, perhaps I might use a stronger word, with which you must regard those by whom you have been, to say the least, misled; I wish to omit all personal considerations: if, indeed, I were to enter into the question of consistency, I think I should have to direct my observations with tolerable impartiality to both sides of the House. I cannot concur with the noble Duke (Duke of Cleveland), who thought that those on the other side of the House are entitled to say that on this question they are pursuing a consistent course. I take leave, with great respect, to remind noble Lords opposite that, up to 1841, there was little or no difference of opinion among them as to the necessity of maintaining the then existing Corn Laws. The noble Marquess has, I think, estimated at six the number of the minority of your Lordships on that subject. And though since that period there has been a difference between the two sides of the House, it has not related to the question whether agriculture is entitled to protection or not, but simply as to its extent and amount, and the most efficient and politic mode of applying and administering that protection. And such I believe was the case down to that memorable month of November, 1845—down to the day when that *verbosa et grandis epistola venit*, which has caused many of your Lordships to exclaim, "Oh, that mine enemy would write a letter!" From that period, and that period alone, we can date the claim of noble Lords opposite; if, indeed, there be a claim—to be considered the opponents of protection. It may be, that some of your Lordships who are about to vote for the second reading, desire to record your opinion against the principle of the sliding scale, to give effect to your own conscientious, and I believe I may say unaltered opinion in favour of a fixed duty. In that case I have nothing to say against your perfect consistency; but if you are about to join a Government for the purpose of abolishing all protection to agriculture in whatever shape, you must not flatter yourselves that you are altogether free

from the imputation of that inconsistency with which you are so ready to taunt Her Majesty's Government. And now, I turn from the personal part of the subject, and from the discussion of the question by whom the measure was proposed and supported, to the much more important matter, the arguments by which it is maintained. But, here I must say, we are met at the outset by a difficulty of rather a singular kind. When, in the other House of Parliament, we have asked the Minister of the Crown a question—not I think an unfair or an unreasonable one—what do you anticipate will be the result of this measure?—the simple answer given was, that they must decline to prophesy; their prophecies failed in 1842, and they would not risk their reputation as prophets hereafter. If we ask what the effect of the measure will be, we are frankly told that they cannot say. Now, where is it you are about to try this experiment, of which the Minister who brings it forward cannot tell what will be the possible or probable results? The old proverb says, *Fiat experimentum in corpore vili*; try your experiment on some small scale, in some insignificant corner of the globe, in some inartificial state of society; try it where a mistake would not be irrevocable; where an error in judgment would not lead to such formidable consequences. But you are going to try this experiment in the wealthiest and mightiest empire of the world; you are trying it in this England of ours, the highest and mightiest among the nations of the world, that which is in the most artificial state of society—that in which the slightest derangement of the social scale, the slightest disturbance of the relations between the different classes of the community—may produce the most extensive, serious, and most irremediable mischief. And it is in this country, and supported by such arguments as you have heard from my noble Friend to-night, that you are invited to try this great experiment, the issue of which the Minister of the Crown tells you he cannot foresee! It may be very well for an irresponsible body, like the Anti-Corn Law League, engaged in an active and an interested pursuit of their own objects—I do not mean to say not believing that their own personal interests are not inconsistent with the public interest—it may be very natural, if not very legitimate, for their agents, and those whom they employ, to hold different language to different classes of the community; to speak to the manufacturing classes of cheap bread, of

bread at half the present price and wages double the present amount; to talk of a grinding aristocracy, of the plunder of the poor, of robbery by the monopolists, of the heartless landlords, and all those clap-trap phrases by which an ignorant multitude have been deceived and deluded, and then to turn round to the agriculturists of this country, and to tell them of the universal prosperity that will result from this measure, and to say, "Do not for a moment apprehend a fall in the price of your produce, the price will rise; far from losing you will only be sharers in the universal gain. Somehow or other bread is to be infinitely cheaper to the consumers—somehow or other you are to get a much better price for the corn you grow." But, my Lords, if this conduct be natural or legitimate in the members of the Anti-Corn Law League, it is neither natural nor legitimate in the First Minister of the Crown, wielding the authority of the Crown, speaking in the name of the Crown, exercising the influence of his high station, and his high character, and his high talents, to carry measures of deep and vital importance, of hazardous and doubtful policy. Your Lordships and the other House of Parliament have a right to be told by the Minister under such circumstances what is the object at which he aims; and you have a right to canvass fully and distinctly, first whether the object be in itself desirable, and next whether the means which he proposes for effecting it are likely to attain that object if it be desirable. You have a right to know from the Minister what he calculates upon, as being the probable effect of this great measure. My Lords, in the silence of the Government upon this point, we turn to the arguments which they have made use of; and although certainly one of them has been in a considerable degree abandoned by my noble Friend this evening, yet in the course of the discussions that I have heard, this measure has been rested mainly upon two arguments, namely, the apprehended famine in Ireland, and the successful operation of the Tariff of 1842. But, my Lords, this does not relieve my difficulty. These arguments may both be invalid, as I will endeavour to show by and by that they are; but valid they cannot both be, for they are mutually contradictory, the one of the other. If the repeal of the Corn Laws, in any mode, or by any possibility, be calculated to relieve the famine in Ireland—supposing always the

famine to exist, it must be by bringing a large amount of corn into consumption at so low a price as to place it within the reach of the poorest and the most distressed of that starving population; but, if I am not much mistaken in the boast which Her Majesty's Government make of the successful operation of the Tariff, it is this: that while it is materially extending commerce, it has not diminished, on the contrary, it has rather tended to raise the price of the articles which have been subjected to its operation. Let me, however, examine these two questions—the famine, and the operation of the Tariff; and if, in entering upon this topic, I am compelled to trouble your Lordships at much greater length than I desire, and to enter upon some details which may be wearisome, but which are certainly not unimportant to the decision of this great question, I must pray your Lordships' indulgence, on the consideration that in entering upon these dry details, I cheerfully and willingly sacrifice all advantage which I might derive from dwelling upon more exciting because more personal topics. Now, with regard to the famine, I must beg to call your Lordships' attention so far back as to the period of October and November last. The noble Lord has told us that the famine was not the inducing cause of this alteration in the Corn Law being proposed. With all respect for my noble Friend, I will venture to say—and I am confident I shall not be contradicted by any single Member of Her Majesty's Government—that if it had not been for the apprehension of scarcity in Ireland, and the supposed failure of the crops, your Lordships would never have been asked—in the course of this Session at all events—to alter or repeal the corn law. When the Cabinet was called together in the close of October last, it was for the purpose of considering the state of Ireland. Papers were laid before us, representing the failure of the potato crop, the anxiety that was felt, the reports of certain learned professors—which reports, by the by, tended mainly to increase the anxiety, and, with all respect for whom, if their advice had been followed, I believe the evil would have been aggravated. We were called upon to consider what steps should be taken for the relief of Irish distress; and it was in consequence of the supposed failure of the potato crop, that we were invited to open the ports by Order in Council, and thereby to suspend the operation of the Corn Law.

My Lords, I was of opinion then, and I continue of opinion now, that at the close of October, in the first place, the real state of the case with regard to the famine, or the apprehension of scarcity in Ireland, was wholly unknown to the Government or to any one else. Not above a third of the potatoes had at that time been dug up. Further, I believed then, and I believe now, that there never was a season in the history of Ireland when, so far from there being either famine or scarcity, there was so large a supply in the country of all descriptions of food for the consumption of the people. We were also told that foreign countries were taking steps to prevent the export of their supplies, that crops upon the Continent were short, and that if our supply failed we should have no means of renewing it from abroad. I certainly thought that was an additional reason against taking such a step as opening the ports, because the effect of this step under such circumstances would be to stimulate consumption at a time when, upon the hypothesis, it was desirable rather to discourage it, and that to stimulate consumption would be likely ultimately to aggravate the evil of distress, if indeed distress and scarcity existed. But I entreat your Lordships to bear in mind the wide and manifest distinction that there is between scarcity or famine, and great local and individual distress. My Lords, I speak of the famine as a vision, an utterly baseless vision, which haunted the imagination, and disturbed the judgment, of the Government. I speak in very different terms, and with very different feelings, of that amount of destitution and individual distress, into which a large body of the small cottiers in Ireland have been thrown by the partial or total failure of their potato crop; but I conceive that this is a kind of distress, this is a species of destitution, upon which your repeal of the Corn Law, whatever effect it produces upon the price of wheat, will produce no more effect, and can produce no more, than if you were to pass a law which should reduce the price of pine-apples. The evil to these people is not that corn is dear, or potatoes dear; corn never was dear; the price of corn, in spite of all that took place, never rose to any very high pitch. The state of distress and suffering to which these people are exposed arises from this, that they are not, as the labourer in England is, dependent for their subsistence upon labour and steady wages, the produce of their gardens serving to eke

out their wages with some little additional comfort; but that they have invested their labour, invested their all, in the cultivation of some small plot of ground, for which they pay a large rent, and if the produce of that plot fails, they have no labour to look to, their stock of provisions is gone, and, having no means of employment, they have no prospect of obtaining money where-
 to purchase food to replace the potato crop which has failed. That is the cause of the distress of the smaller cottiers of Ireland. But now I pray you to mark another class, and it is not an unimportant one, a class which, including the families of those who compose it, comprises probably 5,000,000, or 6,000,000 of the people of Ireland, namely, the small farmers and occupiers of land in Ireland. In what state are they placed? Their system of cultivation is oats and potatoes; their potato crop had failed, or a great part of it was diseased; it was unfit for human food. It was not unfit for the food of animals, and many of them very wisely increased the number of their pigs, fattened them upon the diseased potatoes, and realized a very fair profit. But what was the compensation to a farmer of this class? Why, the potato crop had failed, but his oats were superabundant, bringing a very fair price; and he had in his superabundant oats the means of sustaining himself, and, in their price, of recovering in some degree the loss of his potatoes. And by way of relieving that man you propose, when he has lost his potatoes, to inflict a further injury upon him by reducing the price of his oats. Therefore, as applicable to the famine or scarcity stated to exist in Ireland, I took the liberty of recording my opinion against the proposed opening of the ports. At the same time, so strongly and so forcibly did I feel the importance of unanimity in the Cabinet—so strongly was I convinced of the injury done by the breaking up of any Government, that although entertaining serious doubts whether a suspension of the Corn Laws and the opening of the ports would be of avail, or might even be injurious—I intimated my entire readiness to yield my own opinion, and consent to a suspension of the Corn Law, provided a suspension was proposed. But, when I was told—not exactly in the language of the noble Marquess just now, who talked about a skilful general, and an able diplomatist, making use of the best plea he could find—but still told that that temporary exigency, that

passing emergency of apprehended scarcity in Ireland, was not to lead to a remedy commensurate in duration with the expected evil, but to be made the groundwork of suspending, for the purpose of not re-enacting, the Corn Law, I felt that I could not take that course consistently with my own feeling as an honourable man; and that, with such ulterior views, to propose to Parliament to sanction the opening of the ports would be to lead those who were disposed to support us into a snare and a delusion. Your Lordships are aware, that the discussions at the close of October terminated by an adjournment of the question; several of my Colleagues being of opinion, with me, that at all events we had not sufficient information to act upon. When the Cabinet met again in November, I was one of those who cordially concurred in those measures for the relief of Irish distress adopted by the Government; the chief of those measures consisting in the appointment of a Commission composed of the heads of those departments of the Government who would have the best opportunity of furnishing the population in case of distress with employment as the means of subsistence, in communicating with the Lords Lieutenant of counties, establishing local committees in every district, compelling the landlords of Ireland to know the real state of their several neighbourhoods, and the degree of co-operation which would be expected of them, rendering assistance through the medium of the Commissariat; even entering upon the very delicate task of regulating the markets by the transmission of food from one part of the country to the other, to meet the consequences of local speculation; giving employment where local funds were insufficient; and laying in a certain portion of provisions, in order to feed the destitute in the last extremity, when employment should not be found. I considered these measures applicable strictly to the case of Ireland. I considered that the abrogation of the Corn Law, unjustifiable in itself, could not be warranted upon that ground; and, far from doing good, would assuredly injure the people of Ireland. The question, when the Cabinet met again, was certainly different; but I confess it was with some surprise, and no little disappointment, that when the question was put to the Cabinet, not of an immediate issue of an Order in Council, but of an early summoning of Parliament for the purpose of proposing a virtual abrogation

of the Corn Law, I found myself alone in my opposition. Will you forgive me, my Lords, for one word on the personal subject? I felt deeply and painfully the prospect of separation from Colleagues I esteemed—I felt most painfully the awful weight of responsibility which I found was about to devolve singly upon myself. I am not ashamed to say that I asked for forty-eight hours to enable me to decide on the course I should pursue. My Lords, it was no sacrifice to me to abandon office; on the contrary, I had most rigidly to examine my own mind whether I were unduly influenced to an obstinate perseverance by my anxiety to escape from the responsibilities and labours of public life. I tried to school myself into the belief that, under certain circumstances, the interests of the country might require even a sacrifice of a personal and public character. My Lords, I could not bring myself to so humiliating a conclusion; and most reluctantly, but without difficulty or doubt, supported as I was by one of my Colleagues, whose name I am not at liberty to name, but which if I could name, I am quite sure his position and his character would satisfy all your Lordships that, in subsequently rejoining the Government, he could be actuated by none but the most honourable motives, I was compelled to tender the resignation of my office. Upon that, the Government of Sir Robert Peel was broken up. Your Lordships are all aware of the circumstances which followed. I did not at that time trouble your Lordships with explanations which might possibly have led to controversy; and I owe an apology to your Lordships for digressing now, even for a moment, from this important question, to a matter personal to myself. My Lords, you are called upon to abandon the Corn Law of 1842. And why? In what respect has it deceived your expectations? How has it falsified your prophecies? Your prophecies have been realized to a wonderful degree of accuracy. In what respect has it failed? The object of this and of every Corn Law, I take to be to place this country in a state of virtual independence of foreign countries for its supply of food. I know that object may be scouted by some of the very enlightened politicians of the present day; but it was not thought unworthy the consideration of great men not long passed away from among us; and if your Lordships will forgive me for referring to it, I will quote a passage from a letter of Mr. Huskisson, which puts the

whole question in a few words in the clearest light in which it can be seen. He was writing at the close of the war, and his sentiments are worthy of the deepest attention. We have forgotten the circumstances of that time—some of us, indeed, are too young to remember them—but, generally, we seem not to remember, in dealing with this question, the evils to which, prior to 1815, this country had been subjected from its dependence for a supply of corn on foreign countries. On that occasion Mr. Huskisson said—

“The present war, it is true, is now at an end; but peace is at all times too precarious not to induce us to guard against the repetition of similar calamities whenever hostilities may be renewed. But even in peace the habitual dependence on foreign supply is dangerous. We place the subsistence of our own population not only at the mercy of foreign Powers, but also on their being able to spare as much corn as we may want to buy. Suppose, as it frequently happens, the harvest in the same year to be a short one, not only in this country, but in foreign countries from which we are fed, what follows? The habitually exporting country—France, for instance—stops the export of its corn, and feeds its people without any great pressure. The habitually importing country—England—which, even in a good season, has hitherto depended on the aid of foreign corn, deprived of that aid in a year of scarcity, is driven to distress bordering upon famine. There is, therefore, no effectual security, either in peace or war, against the frequent return of scarcity approaching to starvation, such as of late years we have so frequently experienced, but in our maintaining ourselves habitually independent of foreign supply. Let the bread we eat be the produce of corn grown among ourselves, and for one, I care not how cheap it is. The cheaper the better. It is cheap now, and I rejoice at it; because it is altogether owing to a sufficiency of corn of our own growth. But, in order to ensure a continuance of that cheapness and that sufficiency, we must ensure to our own growers that protection against foreign import which has produced these blessings, and by which alone they can be permanently maintained. The history of the country for the last 170 years clearly proves, on the one hand, that cheapness produced by foreign import is the sure forerunner of scarcity, and, on the other, that a steady home supply is the only safe foundation of steady and moderate prices.”

Now, my Lords, you aim then, by a Corn Law, at independence of foreign supply, accompanied and produced by such an encouragement to your home grower, as shall guarantee him up to a certain point against foreign competition, and shall, beyond that point, protect the consumer against exorbitant and extravagantly high prices, protecting all parties against that which is most injurious to all—rapid and sudden fluctuations. Now, I say, that beyond any law which has ever been in force in this or any

other country, this law of 1842 has accomplished these its great and main objects. First, with regard to the provision of a home supply, we have no statistical tables in this country, and it is a great pity we have not, by which we could ascertain, year by year, the amount of the production of the country; but if it can be proved, that in a state of society in which the population is increasing as rapidly as has been stated by the noble Earl, and in which, let me add, the proportion of wheat consumers is increasing more rapidly, still the population of this great country has not alone had a sufficiency to meet the increased demand, but has had that sufficiency at a reduced price, and with a diminished and not an increased supply from abroad; then, my Lords, I maintain that the inference is, that protection has fully effected its object; and that by its means we have been enabled to keep pace with the increasing demand of our increasing population. I will show you, my Lords, that this has been the case. I must take a series of years, because the quantities imported must necessarily vary largely from year to year; and this whatever may be your legislation; for these fluctuations are dependent on the seasons, over which you have no control. You may provide by legislation, that on an average a larger or a smaller portion of your supply shall be drawn from abroad: but, whether you have a sliding scale, or a fixed duty, or no duty at all, the annual amount of import must greatly vary. In a bad year you will import more; in a good year less, whatever be the state of your law. But looking at the Tables which have been laid before your Lordships, I find that, speaking of wheat alone—and I shall confine myself throughout to wheat, and not weary your Lordships with unnecessary details with regard to other grain, the principles being the same in all—in the course of these last twenty years we have imported 21,432,000 quarters of wheat. The yearly average for the last twenty years amounts to 1,021,000 quarters; for the last three years, to 741,000 quarters; and in the course of the last year it was 308,000 quarters. Has this result, I would ask, been produced by any increased price of wheat at home? A great number of fallacies have been made use of, and statements attributed to us, who defend this Corn Law, which we never uttered. We are constantly told that the intention of this Corn Law was to guarantee to the farmer the price of 55s. a quarter. The

intention of the Corn Law was no such thing. My right hon. Friend, in introducing the measure, stated that if, by legislation, he could fix the average price of corn, he would fix it from 54s. to 58s. The avowed object of the Corn Law, therefore, was this, that when the price is above 58s., the consumer should be protected by a large influx of foreign corn; and that when the price is below 54s., the producer should be protected against any other competition than that which he can engage with upon equal terms—namely, competition with those who are exposed to the same vicissitudes of the same climate, and who have the same advantages, and are subject to the same burdens and restrictions with himself. What has been the result of the Corn Law as far as the consumer is concerned? I find that the average price of wheat for the last twenty years has been 57s. 4d. a quarter, whilst the average price for the last three years, since the Corn Law passed, has only been 50s. 9d., and the price last year, which we have been told was a period of great scarcity, was 50s. 10d. My right hon. Friend stated his wish to keep the price between 54s. and 58s., and since the passing of the Bill the annual average price has not risen above 50s. 9d. or 50s. 10d. But a Return laid before the House of Commons gives a more accurate test of the operation of the sliding scale, and of the manner in which it acts to check the tendency to a rise of price whenever that tendency is exhibited. The Paper I allude to is a return of the weekly price of corn in every week from March, 1844, to March, 1846; and, with respect to those 104 weeks, the result was that the price has been between 54s. and 58s. in no less than 43 of those weeks; the price has been below 54s. in 54 other weeks; the price has been above 58s. in seven weeks only, and the price has never risen in any one week above 59s. So far, therefore, as concerns the consumer, has he any right to say that the Corn Law has deceived any expectations he was led to form of it? Now, although it is quite true that the prices of corn have fallen considerably below that which was anticipated by my right hon. Friend, if we look to the total amount imported since the great influx of 2,500,000 quarters, immediately after the passing of that measure, we shall find that of 2,000,000 quarters which have come in since that time, there have been entered under 55s. only 305,000 quarters; between 55s. and

59s., the actual point at which we desired to limit it by the Bill, 1,475,000 quarters; and between 59s. and 62s., 261,000 quarters. I conceive, therefore, the law has operated in the manner, and nearly to the extent, it was expected to operate. Another great and important point respects the fluctuations in the price of corn. Since this passed, the fluctuation of price which has taken place between 1844 and 1846 is only from 58s. 4d. to 45s. 2d. The whole difference between the highest week and the lowest week in these two years was not a difference of 30 per cent. The greatest weekly fluctuation in the price between any one week and the succeeding is 1s. 6d.; and the greatest fluctuation in any period for the whole four weeks of the month is a fluctuation of 4s. and no more. When this Corn Bill was introduced in 1842, I recollect it being put forward as a matter of boast, that the Corn Laws as they then stood had produced only a fluctuation of 49 per cent. in any one year, while the existing Corn Law has produced only a fluctuation of 30 per cent. in two years. But let us look to the fluctuation of price in other countries, from the month of December, 1844, to December, 1845. Observe, that in two years the total amount of our fluctuation has been 30 per cent., while in that one year, the fluctuation at Dantzic was 56 per cent.; at Hamburgh, 86; at Rostock, 78; at Stettin, 84; at Odessa, 50; and at Alexandria, 54. Perhaps you may tell me, that this is the effect of our own sliding scale and of our Corn Law operating upon prices abroad. Then I will refer you to America. In 1842 my right hon. Friend the Secretary for the Colonies moved for a return of the maximum fluctuation of price in the markets of America, from 1834 to 1840, and according to that return the greatest fluctuation in any one year was in New York, 70 per cent.; in Philadelphia, 76; in Portsmouth, 72; and in New Norfolk, 62. The account of these fluctuations has been carried down to the present time, and between the years 1841 and 1846, (whilst our fluctuation never exceeded 30 per cent. between 1844 and 1845; and whilst on the market of Montreal, which ought, if the argument of my opponents is just, to have been the most affected by our Corn Laws, the fluctuation did not exceed 17 per cent. on the price of last year,) I find in New York in one year a fluctuation of 51 per cent.; in Philadelphia, 50; in Richmond, 76; and in Baltimore, 20. As far, then,

as the experience of three years has gone, no law in this or any other country has produced so great a steadiness of price with cheapness as the law of 1842, which your Lordships are now called on to abandon. But if your Lordships wish to refer to a period of the greatest fluctuation in this country, refer to the period between 1792 and 1805; a period when there was the greatest dependence on the foreigner. Hear on this subject the evidence of Mr. Malthus, in a pamphlet written by him in the year 1814. He says, "During the last century, the period of our greatest importation and dependence on foreign corn was between 1792 and 1805, and certainly in no four years of the whole century was the fluctuation so great. In 1792, the price was 42s.; in 1796, it was 77s.; in 1801, it was 118s.; and in 1803, 56s." So that between 1792 and 1801 the price was almost tripled; and in the short period between 1798 and 1803 it rose from 50s. to 118s., and fell again to 56s., and that in that period of the history of this country in which we were most dependent on foreign supply. If it were necessary to prolong the discussion on this point, I would ask your Lordships to look at the fluctuations of price in other articles. You are told the fluctuations in corn are attributable to the sliding scale; look at the fluctuations in the price of potatoes. There is no sliding scale as respects them; but there is free trade. They may be imported from anywhere, and they pay no duty, yet I know that the price of potatoes varies from 100 to 150 per cent. in the course of a single year. Then, again, look at the price of upland cotton. No sliding scale affects it; and the demand is regular and steady. Yet if you look at the price of upland cotton at Liverpool, in 1836, 1837, and 1838, you will find that it was in January, 1836, 8½d. per lb.; in March, 11½d.; in January, 1837, 10½d.; in May, 5½d.; in December, 8½d.; and in April, 1838, 5d. I ask, is there any fluctuation in corn to be compared with this? Now, I trust, I shall be excused for adverting to another point of importance; namely, the supply which our Corn Laws procure for us to meet the exigencies of the country. I will recall to your Lordships' recollection what was the state of the different countries of Europe at the commencement of the present year. There existed a great apprehension of scarcity among all, and measures were taken for their own protection and security; and that I may not be supposed

to misrepresent in the slightest degree the facts of the case, I will read from a statement made by my right hon. Friend the First Lord of the Treasury. After stating the apprehensions of scarcity felt by various foreign Powers, my right hon. Friend goes on :—

“From Belgium, dated the 24th September, wo heard that the Chambers had sanctioned the proposal of the Government to prohibit export, and permit import. Egypt, on the 22nd of October, prohibited the exportation of all corn arriving at Alexandria after that day. Turkey prohibited the export of all grain from the ports of Anatolia and her Asiatic provinces from the 27th of August, 1845, to harvest-time in 1846. Sweden prohibited the export of potatoes from the 15th October till the next harvest. There was, indeed, at this period, a general apprehension of a scarcity of provisions, extending from Sweden to Egypt, and from Iliga to Turkey, and measures were taken to stop their exportation, and for excluding us from some of our usual sources of supply.”

This shows that the moment a pressure takes place, measures are taken by these parties to stop the exportation of food, and deprive us of the opportunity of obtaining it from them. We were also told to stop the export of provisions, to take off the duty on import, to prohibit the use of grain in distilleries. We took none of those steps. We trusted to the operation—the steady, quiet, certain operation—of our existing Corn Law. I believe that the best test of scarcity is to be found, not in the report of learned professors; but that there is a much better barometer as to that point, and that is the price of food in the market. The self-acting operation of the Corn Law did not come into effect, and because it did not, its authors said that it was a sliding scale that would not slide. Of course it would not, and for this good reason—because there was not a deficiency in the country to increase the price. By relying on the operation of our Corn Laws, what was the result? What was the amount of corn in bond at the close of the year 1845, to meet the exigencies of our demand? I am not talking of the amount in bond now, of the amount most unfortunately accumulated there in consequence of the introduction of this measure, and which may now come in with a ruinous effect on the market. I am speaking of the amount which your Corn Laws provided in bond at a time of universal scarcity. The average quantity in bond in December for the last twenty years, has been 445,000 quarters; and the highest amount in bond in December in any previous year was 899,000 quarters. But in December last, in face of the diffi-

culties in Europe, in face of the established prohibition of export, you had in bond, in waiting for an exigency that did not come, 1,106,000 quarters. Will any man, then, tell me that the Corn Law has failed in the essential points of keeping us, in the main, independent of foreign supply, in securing cheapness and steadiness of price, and in providing for us an abundant foreign supply in case we should require to make up any deficiency in this country? Will any man seriously contend that this great advantage resulting from the Corn Law has been purchased by the sacrifice of commercial interests? Is there any man who does not know the enormous and unparalleled strides which this country has made in commercial and manufacturing industry, I do not say on account of, but I will say notwithstanding, the operation of the Corn Laws? Since the year 1827, the exports of this country have increased from 36,000,000*l.* in value, to 58,500,000*l.* In the course of those years the import of cotton alone has increased from 177,000,000 lbs. to 721,000,000 lbs. In the course of the period since 1814, while the value of landed property, as shown by the property tax paid in respect of schedule A, has increased from 39,300,000*l.* to 45,750,000*l.*, being an increase of 16 per cent., the increase on schedule D, showing the profits of trade, manufactures, and professions, has increased from 35,800,000*l.*, in 1814, to 64,344,000*l.* in 1842, being an increase of no less than 84 per cent., against 16 per cent. increase on land. Now, I ask you, have these Corn Laws proved inconsistent with manufacturing prosperity? And why are we now invited to enter upon this great experiment? It is, I suppose, still further to expand the commercial and manufacturing interests of the country. I belong to a manufacturing county, and no man is less inclined than myself to depreciate the great advantages derived from the manufactures of this country. A great increase has taken place in our wealth, and, in many cases, in the comforts and prosperity of the labouring classes, by this system of manufacturing prosperity. But this system of manufacturing activity is not without its attendant drawbacks and dangers. It is a system that requires to be carefully and steadily watched, instead of being unduly pampered and fostered. Manufacturing industry is subject to constant, great, and rapid fluctuations—its powers of production are always overtaking the

powers of consumption—a period of prosperity is invariably followed by a glut in every market of the world, and corresponding period of adversity. Do nothing, for God's sake, to check the prosperity of your manufactures; but do not let us, by unwise legislation, promote and pamper an unwholesome increase, which, when the bubble bursts, involves all in serious evils. But even if it were certain that an increase and extension of our manufactures were desirable, and would justify all the powers of legislation being brought to bear upon it, it is not clear to my mind that the repeal of the Corn Laws would have the effect of increasing our manufacturing industry. If there be no great reduction of the price of corn in consequence of this measure, it needs no demonstration to show that there will be no larger increased consumption of corn; the consequence is, that there will be a transfer of business, to the same, and no greater extent, from customers in this country to customers abroad, and that would be all. Are we to believe the argument of the successful operation of the Tariff? We are told that the price of wool has risen, and also of timber, silk, butchers' meat, and I know not what besides. I must say, however, that of all the bold paradoxes ever palmed on the credulity of mankind, and passed, upon the authority of great names, for sovereign and supreme wisdom, the boldest and the most laughable is this, that increased competition tends to raise the price of those articles which are the subjects of it. Reason is against it; and more, facts are against it. True, the reduction of a half-penny per pound on wool last year, taking place at a thriving period of your manufactures, did not check consumption; the demand for the article went on increasing more than the supply, and the fall was not felt. But what happened in 1825, when Mr. Huskisson reduced the price 6d. per pound? My noble Friend on the cross benches recollects that Mr. Huskisson reduced the duty from 6d. to 1d., and that, while from 1819 to 1824 the average price of Southdown wool was 1s. 4d., it was from 1825 to 1830 only 10d., being a reduction to the full amount of the duty. If you talk of silk—I will not enter into the details of the silk trade; but admitting for the sake of argument, what I think not quite clear, that the silk manufacture is in a better state than it would have been under a system of greater protection, this

fact is notorious, that simultaneously with the removal of the prohibition from the manufactured article, you largely reduced the duty charged upon the raw material; and your Lordships must allow me to remind you, moreover, that after the prohibition was removed, the silk manufacture of this country was, and has been to the present moment, protected by a duty averaging no less than 30 per cent. on the price of the article. I need not ask you about timber. It is quite true the price of Baltic timber has not fallen to the full extent of the reduction of the duty, though I believe the price of Canadian timber has; but what has been the effect on the price of the article in this country? I hold in my hand a return showing the money price for fifty cubic feet of timber for three years previous to the Tariff, showing a mean price of 103s. 9d.; while since the Tariff the mean price is 91s. 3d., and last year only 86s. 8d. I ask my noble Friend at the head of the Woods and Forests, if he has any doubt of this, whether the Government did not some short time ago offer for sale some timber and bark in the Forest of Dean, and whether he was not obliged to withdraw it without sale in consequence of the depreciation in the price? [Viscount CANNING: It was sold.] Was it? Then what was it sold for? I will not enter upon the question as to the rise in price of butchers' meat, or the various causes which have led to that increase. I find the total amount of sheep imported has been 7,113, and I find that in one single market, in Smithfield, the falling off was from 27,370, in the week ending the 14th of April, 1845, to 16,240 on the 13th of April, 1846. Here, my Lords, is the explanation, and a very sufficient explanation, of the rise in butchers' meat, not on account of, but notwithstanding the limited operation of the Tariff. I contend that under this proposed abrogation of the law there will be a large reduction in the price of corn. But, before I leave the question of the Tariff, I may be permitted to refer for a moment to the effect the Tariff has had upon British shipping. Great stress has been laid upon this point. Prices were to fall, but the Tariff was to have the effect of increasing our commercial activity in the employment of British shipping. A great deal has been said of the increase in the amount of our shipping from 1842 to 1845. But, my Lords, how does this case stand with reference to the Tariff, to which I was a consenting party,

because I thought it would have a tendency to settle prices, and that it would tend, moreover, to expose the home grower to such an amount of competition, and no more, than he could very safely meet? The principle of the Tariff was protection, and not prohibition. The principle of the Tariff was competition, and my notion of competition is this, that you must have the competing parties placed upon an equality to start from; and that unless you have this equality of circumstances in the competing parties, your principle of free trade may turn out to be the most rank and entire monopoly. Now what has been the increase of British shipping employed under the new Tariff? The tonnage of vessels belonging to different ports of the British Empire in 1842, was 3,619,000 tons, in 1844 it was 3,636,000 tons; showing in two years an increase of 17,000 tons. Now, since 1833, there has been a progressive annual increase in the amount of your shipping tonnage each year, with one exception, surpassing the year preceding. The total amount of that increase has been 985,000 tons, and the average biennial increase 197,000 tons. But the increase in the two years since the adoption of the Tariff has been 17,000 tons. Is that all? Now I will show you a branch of the shipping trade of this country in which there has been a large increase, and which compensates for the large deficiency which would otherwise have been presented by those two years—a branch certainly for which the Tariff can take no credit, and which depends and has depended on the prosperity of agriculture, and on the improvements going on in agriculture, encouraged by a system of protection. I refer to the number of ships engaged in the guano trade in the years 1843 and 1845. You may smile, and think this an inconsiderable branch of trade; but what has been the increase in the tonnage and number of ships employed in it? This trade began in 1841, and in 1843 the amount of tonnage was 4,056 tons, employing 202 seamen; and in 1845, 219,000 tons, employing 11,434 seamen. There was, therefore, an increase of 200,000 tons of shipping in the guano trade alone since the Tariff was adopted. Now, I admit the fall in the price of corn will not be equal to the reduction in the duty, and I do not think it is difficult to estimate what the amount will be on a large proportion of foreign corn. I do not refer now to the prices in Dantzic or other

places, but to what our experience of the Tariff informs us. At the price of 55s. we have had a large importation of foreign corn; and at that price the duty is 15s., giving the real price 40s., which is the maximum price that you could expect to realize. We may, therefore, fairly anticipate that when the duty is taken off we shall have a large importation of foreign corn at 40s. inundating our markets, and making 40s. a quarter pretty nearly the maximum price you can ever expect to realize. I feel, my Lords, that I am troubling you at too great length. I am ashamed to do so; but this is a great question. I feel that I am arguing the question very feebly; but I trust your Lordships will bear with me a little longer. I received this morning a letter from a gentleman who is at the head of the oldest firm in the corn trade in Liverpool. The letter is as follows:—

“ Liverpool, May 23, 1846.

“ My Lord,—As principal of the oldest firm in the corn trade at this port, I am induced, by the distinguished part your Lordship has consented to take, at this perilous juncture, in defence of the best interests of your country, to trouble you with a few lines on the past and present state and prospects of the trade here, with relation to the momentous question which is so soon to receive the sanction or disapproval of your Lordships' House; and although I cannot doubt but you are already possessed of all the necessary information to enable you to refute the sophisms and fallacies so unblushingly put forth by Sir Robert Peel and Sir James Graham in their ‘famine’ speeches in the House of Commons, I nevertheless venture to trespass upon your time for a few moments.

“ There is now not the smallest doubt in the minds of thinking men here, but that the little unfavourable weather we had in September last, coupled with the partial decay of the potatoes, was seized on with avidity by the Anti-Corn-Law League, and their willing instrument, Sir Robert Peel, to sound an alarm of a deficiency of food; and thus, by working upon the minds of a few other of Her Majesty's Ministers, to bring about the consummation of their long-cherished project—a repeal of the existing Corn Law. Inconsiderable as was the advance in prices, produced by the unfounded alarm created, your Lordship may rely upon it, that the rise would have been a good deal less considerable but for the fallacious cry set up by the League of a serious deficiency in the wheat crop; for I will venture to assert, (and the fact must have been known to Sir R. Peel,) that seldom was there in England so large a surplus of wheat from any previous crop as there was from the crop of 1844 in October last. I could adduce no better proof of the abundance of the crops in 1842, 1843, 1844, and of their sufficiency for the ordinary wants of our population, than the fact that we have had scarcely any liberation of foreign wheat or flour since September, 1844, (the duty paid in the whole of that year being at the rate of 16s. and 17s. per quarter,) a

period of nearly twenty-one months; and though Sir R. Peel's new measures have been delayed beyond all calculation, the supply of home-grown wheat (English and Irish) has proved amply sufficient for the wants of the community; and you may rest assured there is still a large quantity of wheat held by our farmers, especially in twelve or fifteen of our midland and southern counties, where the last year's crop was most abundant, and that even Ireland, also, is very far from being yet exhausted.

"Besides some stocks of English and Irish wheat, we have at this port of foreign in bond 270,000 quarters wheat, and upwards of 600,000 barrels (196 lbs.) of American flour—a stock unprecedented in the annals of Liverpool. Moreover, the former will now increase materially, weekly; and the latter (judging from the advices just received, by the Great Western, from New York) is likely to be augmented during the summer to 1,000,000 barrels, even if our present bonded prices alone be maintained.

"Now, in anticipation of Sir R. Peel's new proposition, the best flour in bond brought here 33s. per barrel in November last, whereas at the present moment, the six months that were to have exhausted our home supply having elapsed, the same flour is worth only 24s. per barrel, though the holders of it rely confidently upon its speedy liberation at a duty of 2s. 6d.

"My house has this week received advice of the purchase of a considerable quantity of prime flour in New York, to cost, with freight to Liverpool, 22s. 9d. per barrel; and there are other purchases which stand in only 22s. 3d. per barrel, freight included. I have lately received consignments of this article by the finest American ships at a freight of 1s. 7½d. per barrel, and some has been shipped at 1s. 6d. freight. I further beg to inform your Lordship that I hold in bond two cargoes of fair red wheat, which were imported early last year from Ibraila, on the Danube, at a cost of 14s. per quarter free on board ship, the freight to Liverpool being 9s. 6d. per quarter; and I do not hesitate to give it as my deliberate opinion, that if the measure now before your Lordships' House be suffered to become law, we shall, after the expiration of three years, be annually in the receipt of 5,000,000 quarters of foreign wheat and flour, probably more, provided the seasons be ordinarily favourable, and our average prices admit of the sale of it at not less than 36s. to 40s. per quarter gross in England, the duty being 1s. per quarter as proposed."

Between September, 1844, and May, 1845, during the whole of which time the price was permanently from 45s. to 46s., and the duty 20s., there were entered for home consumption 120,000 quarters of wheat, which, consequently, realized to the importers from 25s. to 26s. a quarter. But I am not absurd enough to suppose that if the duty had been taken off, because these parties could afford to import and sell corn at from 25s. to 26s., therefore they would have done so. These parties would have derived very large profits from their importation; and what would have been the result? There are many dis-

tricts of country on the Continent, larger, perhaps, than many of your Lordships imagine, which might be devoted to the growth of corn. Look, for example, at the plains of Hungary. There you have very considerable districts admirably qualified for the growth of wheat, to the cultivation of which the opening of your markets will give great encouragement. But even supposing that no great addition be made to the area of the corn-exporting countries, there can be no doubt that the application of skill and capital to the improved cultivation of the land, would give to the cultivator a far greater amount of produce from the present area than it now yields. Your calumniated and ill-treated farmers can produce about twenty-eight bushels to the acre; in hardly any other country is the produce more than fourteen bushels to the acre. A large profit is derived by the importers from these countries. This tends to the application of capital to the improvement of the soil. The continued application of capital and skill enables the cultivator to produce his corn much more cheaply, and the same effect will be produced by the application of capital to improve and facilitate the means of shipment. My objections to this measure, therefore, are not lessened but rather aggravated by the fact, that you will not feel the injury it entails all at once, but that, gradually and progressively, the importation of a larger and larger amount of foreign supply will be encouraged by your legislation, and will by degrees drive out of cultivation a larger and larger amount of corn land in this country. But it is said, that when the price of corn falls the manufacturers will obtain a great outlet for their goods, and will be able to sell them at a much cheaper rate. But how are they to sell them more cheaply than at present? How is this cheapness to be effected? If it is to be effected at all, it will be effected by a reduction of wages. I thought it was a favourite doctrine of the Anti-Corn-Law League, I know it is a view which has been taken by some Members of Her Majesty's Government, that the price of corn has nothing to do with the amount of wages. As I have said, it is anticipated by the repeal of the present Corn Law the manufacturers will be able to produce their goods more cheaply. I do not exactly understand how they can do this without paying their labourers lower wages. Now, I do not mean to say that either in the manufacturing or the agri-

cultural districts the rate of wages exactly or regularly follows the price of corn; certainly it does not follow all the fluctuations in the price of corn. I say that wages, like everything else, are regulated by the proportion between the demand and supply. In proportion to the demand for labour, the working classes were ready to enter into competition for that labour, which would afford them the necessaries and comforts of life. But the amount of the necessaries and comforts of life must be ultimately measured by money; and consequently, the competition remaining the same, if a lower amount of money would procure the same amount of the necessaries and comforts of life, the price of labour must fall in proportion as the price of corn falls. I do not say, however, that it will follow all the fluctuations of the price of corn. This is a most important point. It is of vast importance to the labouring population that the price of corn should be steady, be it high or be it low. The labourer, where prices are low, has not the prudence or foresight to economize his earnings; and when the pendulum swings the other way he is too often plunged into a state of distress. It is then in the absence of fluctuation from one extreme to another, and not on the average money rate of wages, that the comforts of the labourer mainly depends. If, however, the labourer's money wages are to be reduced, he ought, I think, to have fairly stated the balance of advantage and disadvantage to which he is about to be exposed under this system. Suppose a man with a wife and three children consume (I take the highest average) five quarters of wheat a year, and that there is a permanent fall of 10s. in the price of corn; a diminution of 1s. per week in the wages of any one member of the family—and you can hardly suppose that any diminution would be less than that—more than counterbalances any advantage derived to the family from the reduction of 50s. in price of the five quarters of corn they consume. But then I am told that even if there is no fall in price, still we must export largely, from the necessity of furnishing us with a return. But then, we are told that, even if manufactures do not become cheaper, trade will increase largely from the necessity, on the part of foreign countries, of taking our goods in exchange for their produce. This argument assumes that Russia, Prussia, and the United States, do not take our manufactures because we refuse

to receive their corn in exchange. There never was argument less founded on fact than that. The fact is, with regard to all those countries, that at the present moment our imports from them largely preponderate over our exports to them; and the duties we impose upon their goods—ay, even upon corn and timber—are far lower than the average amount of duties which all those countries charge upon the principal articles of our manufacture which we export to them. Take the case of our trade with the United States. You may perhaps be surprised to learn that the value of the cotton alone which we take from the United States, in the course of a single year, far exceeds the value of all the goods put together which we export to the United States in the same period. For a period of five years the average value of our exports to the United States has been 5,700,000*l.* a year. For a period of eighteen years it has averaged about 7,000,000*l.* a year. Now, assuming that we take four-fifths of our whole supply of cotton from the United States, and that that cotton is worth 4*d.* per lb., (a low average,) our imports of cotton alone from the United States have amounted in those five years to 39,087,000*l.*, or an average of 7,817,000*l.* per annum. Since 1827 our imports of cotton have increased from 177,000,000*lbs.* to 721,000,000*lbs.*, while our exports during the same period have remained stationary. I may refer on this point to an authority which would not be disputed—that of the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States; and I beg those noble Lords, who advocate a system of reciprocity, and who anticipate those great advantages which we are to derive from taking a larger quantity of the produce of the United States, of Russia, and of Prussia, to bear with me while I quote from this report from the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States on this subject. From that report the following appears :—

TRADE WITH UNITED STATES.

Years.	Imports into U. S.	Exports.	Balance.
1840	39,130,921	70,420,846	31,289,925
1841	51,099,639	62,376,402	11,276,764
1842	38,613,043	52,306,650	13,693,607
1843	28,078,582	40,901,835	17,823,253
1844	45,459,122	61,721,876	16,262,754
1845	49,003,725	61,044,535	11,140,810
	253,185,031	354,772,144	6)101,587,113
			16,981,165

"This," the Secretary observes, "is the nominal balance, but there should be about 25 per cent. at least added to this, to make up the real balance. The exports given in the above table are made up according to the home valuation, and the returns from the shipments would, of course, be increased by any profits that may be realized in foreign countries. There has been a balance in our favour in each of the past six years, and, with one exception (1839), in each of the past nine years. It appears by these statements, that our foreign trade is yearly becoming more profitable to the United States. Our export trade is annually increasing, while our imports remain about the same. . . . Any modification made in the Corn Laws of Great Britain, permitting the introduction, on reasonable terms, of our bread stuffs, will give an additional impetus to our export trade, and prove of immense advantage to the producers of this country, by giving an outlet for our surplus produce. On the other hand, every improvement or increase made in our manufacturing establishment serves to supply the home demand for cotton and woollen manufactures, and tends to reduce the importation of these articles."

The writer of this report then goes on to expatiate on the unfriendly relations and correspondence subsisting between the two Powers. He refers to the indissoluble links in which we are bound by commercial advantages, and he seems ready to congratulate us that the little cloud in the West seemed to have passed away. "On the other hand," the Secretary goes on to say, "every improvement or increase made in our manufacturing establishment serves to supply the home demand for cotton and woollen manufactures, and tends to reduce the importation of these articles." This, then, is to be the result of a liberal measure for allowing the importation of bread stuffs from the United States. If you flatter yourselves that by such a measure you will gain any advantage for your manufacturers, undeceive yourselves; the Secretary to the Treasury of the United States tells you that they will soon be able to dispense with your assistance, and that they will not require your manufactures. Then, with regard to Russia, I find that Mr. McGregor gives the following statement for the year 1838:—

Total exports.....	£11,996,471
Of which to Great Britain	6,977,326
Average imports from Great Britain	1,663,342
Balance	£5,314,054

Thus leaving an average balance of 5,000,000*l.* in favour of Russia; while to Prussia, the declared value of our exports was in the same period 505,000*l.*, and the estimated value of the imports from that country was 3,138,000*l.* You talk about a duty of 25, 30, or 50 per

cent. upon timber as an extravagant and prohibitory duty. By the United States' tariff, the duty upon our woollens and silks is 40 per cent.; upon our cotton, ale, and porter, 50 per cent.; upon coals, 60 per cent.; and upon paper, 75 per cent.; and their duties upon various other articles of our manufacture, which are principally articles of export, range from 45 to 150 per cent., and upon glass amount to 243 per cent. But the tariffs of Russia and Prussia are equally restrictive.

"Russia," says Mr. McGregor, "may be said to prohibit the importation of every material which can be drawn by the labour of her serfs, from her mines and forests; and of every foreign manufactured article, in order that the labour of these serfs, with the aid of machinery, either imported or made in the country, and directed by skilful foreign artizans, shall be made to produce articles either similar to, or that may be substituted for, those of foreign manufacture."

Those articles of your manufacture, the importation of which is not prohibited by Russia, are subjected to an average duty of 65 per cent., ranging upon some articles, for instance glass, to 900 per cent. Prussia imposes a duty varying from 50 to 130 per cent. And yet the argument is boldly put forward, that our protective system, which imposes a duty of about 25 per cent. upon the importation of corn, prevents us from receiving the wheat of those countries which levy a duty of 60, 70, or 100 per cent. upon our manufactures. Various expectations of advantage have been held out to Great Britain on this subject; and in 1839, Dr. Bowring, who had been appointed to make inquiries on those topics, stated as follows to your Lordships' House:

"August 7, 1839.—I have put prominently forward the subject of cotton and woollen manufactures; I have been asked what we were disposed to do, and have mentioned that the question of the timber duties might be opened, and any minor subject interesting to the Prussian Government. On these grounds they are willing to treat. Prussia will propose and support a general reduction of the duty on cotton fabrics; she will also recommend a new classification of woollens, so that the duty shall press less heavily on the lower qualities. The extent of the reduction will depend on the powers which England has of meeting her, and on this point I hope your Lordships will favour me with early instructions."

And again the same year—

"It is clear, however, that the amount of changes to be obtained here is wholly dependent upon the views and the powers of the Government at home, and not our own legislation. I have put forward the points which interest us most, viz.:—reductions on the duties on cottons, woollens, hardware, and pottery. The general reply is, that

Prussia will recommend diminished duties on these articles, and will try to give effect to her recommendations, if we can obtain liberal modifications of the corn and timber duties in Great Britain. I have explained all the difficulties of these questions, but still am very anxious to obtain from the Prussian Government specific declarations that if such and such changes take place in England, they will be met by such and such changes here. The head of the customs says they will entertain a proposal for a general reduction of the duties on cottons, and for a classification of the duties on woollens, so as to relieve the lower qualities of the prohibition which the system of taking the duties by weight brings with it, and for lowering of the duties on hardware and pottery; the groundwork of the understanding to be, that so much shall be deducted if the duties on timber are lowered so much, and so much more if a fixed duty be laid on wheat, instead of the present fluctuating scale. I have not found any of the authorities here expecting the introduction of their corn into England duty free."

Well, my Lords, we have reduced the duty on timber "so much," and we are about to do, with respect to corn, more than any of the Prussian authorities ventured to expect: and now let me ask my noble Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, how much has Prussia done, and how much does he expect she will do, in reference to our cottons, woollens, hardware, and pottery? What has been the effect of the reductions we have already made in the duty on timber, with regard to our exports of cotton to the Northern States of Europe? Since 1841, our imports of timber have increased from 351,000 loads to 642,000 loads. Now in 1843 we exported to Russia, Prussia, Denmark, and Sweden, 2,200,000 yards of plain cotton; now, we export only 2,000,000. We then exported 1,200,000 yards of printed cottons; now, we export only 970,000 yards. Your imports of timber have nearly doubled; but your exports to these people, in spite of Dr. Bowring's predictions, have fallen off instead of increasing. I suppose, at all events, that your shipping trade has improved. I have been told that British merchants will not engage in the corn trade because it is speculative. Speculative! why speculation is the basis of all trade. Take off what duties you please, the corn trade must be eminently speculative, because it is dependent upon the seasons and the probable demand in this country. But it is said our merchants are too wise to engage in these speculations. It is said they are unsuited to the character of the British nation. It is said that hazardous speculations, leading possibly to great risk, and possibly to great gain, are so adverse to the character of the people of this country,

that it is not likely any great number of persons would engage in them. And this is said in the year 1846! Well, but the timber trade is not a speculative trade. We have opened that trade. Our shipping, of course, have entered largely into that trade. Listen to a fact which is of great importance. In 1839, the Baltic trade employed 612 British ships, against 566 foreign ships. In 1845, it employed 609 British ships, against 1,485 foreigners. In 1839, there were 145,000 tons British employed, against a nearly equal amount of foreign tonnage; in 1845, there were only 133,000 tons British, against 378,000 tons foreign. In 1839, there were 6,016 British seamen employed, against 6,300 foreign seamen; in 1845, there were 5,375 British seamen employed, against 17,169 foreigners. But even if I were to admit that you might produce a large increase in your manufactures for a time, under a system of free trade: that you might puff up your manufactures with a brief, but extraordinary prosperity; when that fails, as it will fail, and when the day of distress and difficulty comes—when war intervenes, I think that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs would feel much more easy in the event of a war with the United States—which God forbid!—if, instead of drawing four-fifths of our cotton from the United States, we drew four-fifths of it from our own territories. But when war comes, these markets will be closed against you. You will have destroyed your home market, and when your foreign market fails you, then comes the period of depression—then comes the bitter suffering amongst the manufacturers—then comes the bitter reaction of feeling against those who are now deluding their unhappy dupes with the prospect of increased wages and of "cheap bread." Now, my Lords, I have spoken of the home market. Do not let your Lordships, and do not let the country, undervalue the importance of this home market. If you were to believe certain cotton manufacturers—if you were to believe what has been put forward in another place—you would believe that seven-eighths of the whole quantity of cotton goods are exported, and that the consumption of cotton goods among the population of this country amounts to little more than 2s. per head. Your Lordships will judge of the accuracy of that statement when I tell you that in 1840 the consumption of the West Indies was, not 2s. per head, but 17. 6s. per head of the popula-

tion. I cannot believe that when the West Indies consume 1*l.* 6*s.* per head of your cotton goods, the population of this country consume only 2*s.* per head. Now, I don't hesitate to state my conviction that the home market of this country is to the foreign as forty to seventeen. In the year 1820, there were exported 248,000 yards of cotton made up into goods. In 1844, that quantity was increased to 1,046,000 yards, or nearly fourfold; but in consequence of the immense fall in price, that fourfold increase in quantity produced an increase of only one-fourth in the value. The value was 17,612,000*l.* against 13,000,000*l.* in the former year. In 1823, Mr. Huskisson estimated the value of the cotton goods consumed in England at 32,000,000*l.*; and I find that the home consumption, deducting all that had been exported, was 73,000,000 of lbs. weight in the year 1820, and that it had increased to 280,000,000 of lbs. weight worked up for goods, employing British labour, and paid by British consumers, in 1843. Allowing that there has been a proportionate reduction in the price of articles of home consumption; that the increase, therefore, of fourfold amount has been only one-fourth in value, your whole consumption in 1843 was worth—and it is much more now—40,000,000*l.* sterling, against an export of cotton goods to the value of 17,612,000*l.* 40,000,000*l.* is a low estimate for the amount of cotton goods worked up and consumed in this country; and if I take the great articles of produce of this country—cotton, woollen, linen, silk, coals and culm, iron, hardware, brass, copper, leather, saddlery, cabinet wares, and papers—of which the exports amount in value to 48,344,000*l.*, at a low estimate, the total amount produced is 250,000,000*l.*; thus leaving nearly 200,000,000*l.* out of the 250,000,000*l.* for the consumption of the home market. Now, my Lords, that is the market you are now called upon to endanger; these are the customers you are called to sacrifice in your blind zeal to promote the export trade by your “cheap bread,” and the importation of foreign corn. But then I am told by the manufacturers—“Surely, there will be a reduction in the price of corn, and an increase in the consumption.” That is not quite so clear. There may be a diminution in the price of corn, but cheapness and dearthness, my Lords, are relative terms; they are not positive terms. An article may be cheap in point of money cost, but very dear in point of ability on the part

of the consumer to purchase. Wheat is cheaper in Ireland than in England—cheaper in Poland than in Ireland; but wheat is not more within the reach of the population of Poland than of the population of Ireland; and paying an infinitely higher price for all articles of consumption, the ability of the consumer in this country to purchase, makes the articles virtually cheaper—that is to say, more within his reach; and he is, therefore, able to consume more of them. Therefore, it does not follow because you reduce the price of corn, and thereby diminish the cost of your manufactures, that you increase the consumption of manufactures; and that therefore your home consumers will be able to take the same amount as at present. I have gone over a great part of this question, and I know I have trespasssed upon your attention. I come now to the question, upon whom will this loss fall? I saw lately in one of the French newspapers, an article upon the probable effect of the destruction of the Corn Law, and there was this philosophical argument made use of:—“*Quand même ces millionnaires d'Anglais perdraient le quart de leurs revenus, ils ne jouiraient pas moins des douceurs de la vie.*” Now, I, for my part, am not satisfied to have one-fourth of our incomes taken away, though we may have some of “the sweets of life” remaining. Something has been said, in language unfairly and unjustly misapprehended—something has been said about the difficulty of administering the affairs of the Government, and reconciling the conflicting claims of “an ancient monarchy, a proud aristocracy, and a reformed House of Commons.” Now, my Lords, I entirely put by the erroneous interpretation made upon that expression. I admit the sentiment—I admit the difficulty—and I admit further than that; I admit, further, that you are bound not to legislate for a class. You are not to legislate for the interest of one class against the interest of another; but this I say, that if you materially alter the social relations of the different classes of the community in this country—if you lower one at the expense of another, it is not a private injury, but a public injury, that you inflict upon society; and whatever may be the difficulty of keeping the balance between the “ancient monarchy,” between the “proud aristocracy,” and the “reformed House of Commons,” rely upon it, my Lords, the difficulty will not be less, if for

"a proud"—in the proper sense of the word—you substitute a "pauper and dependent aristocracy." And if you do, rely upon it, you break down in that "proud aristocracy" the firmest break-water and the safest barrier between that limited monarchy and that spirit of democracy which is fitly represented in the reformed House of Commons. Do not mistake me when I speak of the aristocracy. I do not speak exclusively nor mainly of that body which I have now the honour to address. I speak, my Lords, of the great body of the landed proprietors of this country. I speak of men unennobled by rank, and many of them undistinguished by great wealth, but who, and their ancestors before them, for generations after generations, have been the centre each of his respective locality—who have the *prestige* of old associations attached to their names; who conduct the business of their respective counties; who influence the opinions and feelings of their respective neighbourhoods; who exercise a modest and a decent hospitality, and preside over a tenantry who have hereditary claims upon their consideration and affections. My Lords, these are the aristocracy of this country to whom I allude. Reduce these men, and you inflict an irretrievable and irreparable injury upon the country. Lower them in the scale, and you have deranged the social machine beyond the power of correction. God forbid that the successful manufacturer or that the princely merchant should not take his place among the landed aristocracy of this country! Such infusions add fresh vigour and power to that class of the community; but depend upon it, if you sweep that class away at once with all the associations attached to their names, their families, their histories, and the previous associations which belong to the character of their families, and substitute a new body of capitalists, to come amidst an unattached tenantry, and a neighbourhood where no associations are connected with their names, their moral influence and effect will be irretrievably lost. I say I should not be satisfied if I were to believe that the loss would mainly fall upon the proprietors of this country; but I am satisfied that there never was so great a delusion as this. Why, a reduction of 10s. a quarter on wheat is equivalent to a reduction of 40s. an acre on a great portion of the wheat lands of this country, and when accompanied by a corresponding reduction in the price of other articles will

go far to eat up the whole rental of the landed proprietor. My noble Friend on the cross benches most ably argued this part of the case, and I will not, therefore, dwell at any great length upon it. The fact is, that the loss will fall—ay, and they know it will fall—they showed by their feelings the other day—that it will fall, not mainly on the landlords, but on the tenant farmers. The first step these tenant farmers will take to relieve themselves, will be to suspend improvements—will be to discharge the labourers—will be to reduce wages—will be to drive those unhappy labourers into the manufacturing districts, to enter into hopeless competition there for the lowest class of employment in manufacturing labour, carrying their own wretchedness to pine away in the manufacturing towns, adding to the already grievous competition for employment, and thus pressing down the wages of the manufacturing operatives, as well as those of agricultural labourers. What would be the consequences to the landed proprietors of the country? I will assume even the case of one unencumbered by any debt, and whose income is entirely clear, though I fear such cases are the exception rather than the rule. But what is the first thing he does? He dismisses a certain portion of his establishment. It is no great sacrifice of real comfort to him; but he turns into the labour market a great number of competitors for labour whom his fortune has hitherto employed; and, mind you, whatever else may be said against the landed proprietors of the country, I do not think that it can be charged against them that they are a class of men accumulating and hoarding wealth, and not spending their incomes at least as fast as they receive them. Well, then, they reduce the employment. And now mind what we are told, "True, but you may make up any loss yourselves. You have only to act up to the real principles of free trade." Well, what are these real principles of free trade? They are, to dismiss every useless and unprofitable hand; they are, to employ no men beyond those who are absolutely required to make a profit to their employer. Are they to have no consideration whatever for tenants who may have been upon the land perchance for fifty years? No: it is more profitable to have one large farm than three small ones. Pull down two or three houses of human beings, and establish one great farm—it is cheaper, and will keep up your

rents. Your new tenants have the capital; the others have none; let them go and starve. There are not above 600,000 tenants whose holdings are under 200*l.* a year—at least there were not in 1814. Do not stop at such a “drop in the ocean” as that. Turn them adrift; bring new tenants from a distance, from the Anti-Corn-Law League, place them on large farms, encourage them to spend capital, and then you will be able to recover all the injurious effects of a fall in the price of corn—that is, if the law did not prohibit it. But, my Lords, the law imposes upon you the burden—even if your own feelings would not revolt at such a system, the law imposes upon you the burden of maintaining all the poor. But I have too good an opinion of the landlords of England to believe that they would act on such principles. I believe that to the extent of their ability they would go on giving the utmost amount of employment that they could. I believe they know that they have to deal, not with stocks and stones, but with men, human beings, with the same feelings, the same attachments, and the same affections as themselves. And I do not believe that under the pressure of the greatest difficulty the landlords of England as a body would adopt, even for their own protection, the cold and selfish and calculating doctrines of political economy and free trade. But, my Lords, if this system is to be adopted in England—if you venture to recommend this system in England, will you dare to advise that it should be carried into execution in Ireland? In Ireland the bulk of the population are small farmers, holding farms which vary from one to twelve acres—a farm of fifteen acres is a large farm; they have no capital and but little skill—they exhaust the land. I admit it—they do not pay half the rent which the employment of greater skill and capital would extract from the land. Carry into effect your doctrines of political economy, your landlords will suffer—but they may recover themselves. The clearance system I have often heard denounced as at the root of half the evils of Ireland; but the doctrines of free trade require a wholesale application of that system. You may make much more money, and preserve yourselves from all loss; turn off the farmers of Ireland, turn off your tenants, get capital, and in a little time after the existing generation are starved out you will find that things go on very well. Possibly that may be so; but he would be a bold and a hardhearted man

who tried the experiment. And then to tell me that this measure—this repeal of the Corn Law—is brought forward as a measure of relief to Ireland above all! I understand what you mean when you talk of relief to England. England is an importing country; it may be for the benefit of her population, though I doubt if it be found to be so in the long run, that the price of corn should be greatly lowered; but then as to Ireland, whose exports are exclusively agricultural, and which is entirely an exporting, not an importing country—to say that you are benefiting Ireland by reducing those exports by which alone she can obtain a return of the comforts of life and the articles of manufacture which she receives from you—that you are to benefit Ireland by reducing the value of her exports to the amount of 1,500,000*l.* or 2,000,000*l.* sterling a year, is a proposition which I would place by the side of that other paradox—that increased competition tends to raise prices. Lastly, and I am sure your Lordships will be glad to find that I am drawing to a close, I must call your attention to one branch of the question so important that it cannot be overlooked, and upon which, from the situation I lately had the honour of holding, I feel that I am entitled to address you. I allude to the effect which is to be produced, not by the repeal of the Corn Law, but by the principles of free trade, and the doctrine of the removal of protection, upon the Colonies. Now your foreign trade takes a very large amount of foreign shipping, and a very small amount of British shipping—I beg to call your attention to the fact, in the first instance, that by a Return laid before the House of Commons in the year 1845, the tonnage of ships to your Colonies was 1,273,395 tons British, entered inwards, against not one single ton foreign. Cleared outwards there were 1,263,432 tons British, against 3,702 tons foreign; your colonial trade, therefore, being, as it always is, exclusively carried on in British ships, employing British seamen, and giving the profit of the trade on both sides to British subjects exclusively. I will not enter upon the extent of that trade. But here are a certain number of the Colonies, the exports to which, in the year 1844, amounted to no less than 14,247,714*l.* And now, my Lords, allow me to say, in passing, that when we calculate the amount of the export trade of this country, we include in that export trade, which bears so small a proportion to the home trade—we include

in that trade the trade which goes on with your Colonial Empire, and amounting to one-third of the whole. Now, destroy this principle of protection, and I tell you in this place that you destroy the whole basis upon which your Colonial system rests. My Lords, if you do not know the advantages of your Colonies, Napoleon Bonaparte knew them well. It is by your Colonial system, based upon the principles of protection, that you have extended your arms—I do not mean your military arms, I mean your commercial arms—to every quarter and to every corner of the globe. It is to your Colonial system that you owe it that there is not a sea on which the flag of England does not float; that there is not a quarter of the world in which the language of England is not heard; that there is not a quarter of the globe, that there is no zone in either hemisphere, in which there are not thousands who recognise the sovereignty of Britain—to whom that language and that flag speak of a home, dear, though distant, of common interests, of common affections—men who share in your glories—men who sympathize in your adversities, men who are proud to bear their share of your burdens, to be embraced within the arms of your commercial policy, and to feel that they are members of your great and imperial Zollverein. It was said, I think, by Mr. Cobden, that a system of protection is a system of mutual robbery. I admit that it is “a mutual system;” it is a system under which, and in accordance with which, each surrenders some advantage to himself, for the purpose of partaking in the general advantage of all—it is a system by which each sacrifices something of the profits of his own trade for the purpose of ensuring a reciprocal advantage from others. I am not sure that it would not be found in the end to be a certain reciprocity of profits, a system in which both parties gain—both parties are secured against hostile interference—against foreign intrusion—against foreign caprice and foreign hostility—would in fact, in the long run, be that of which we heard so much, “buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest;” and that, even though the profits might not be readily or distinctly expressed in a money value. Sure I am, that whatever disadvantage may be sustained by the trifling additional amount of a protecting duty on articles of colonial produce; and whatever may be the small amount added to the cost on the British article under a protecting

duty, still the disadvantage is amply compensated by the extension of our power over the wide world—by securing for us in every quarter friends and allies—by securing for our people certain employment and certainty of consumption, uninterfered with by foreign competition—and by employing a vast amount of British seamen, ready to act at any moment in defence, and for the sustainment of the strength, of the Empire. Yes, taking into account all these things, I will coincide with Mr. Cobden in the correctness of his representation of the system of “protection,” if he will substitute for “mutual robbery,” a system of “mutual insurance.” I say, then, that upon the system of protection is based the whole of our colonial system. I know that your political economists are for casting off your Colonies, that they say let them trade with us, or with any other country—give them the full advantages of free trade—let us not restrain them—as they are removed from all protection, let them also be free from all burdensome duty. I do not say that I have any doubt as to the loyalty of these Colonies, for I have no doubt of their attachment; but I do say that you should not do anything to weaken that attachment—that you should be very careful that, in granting commercial independence, you do not take a step to their political independence. You cannot tell them to trade freely with all nations, without also telling them to look no longer to you as their protectors. You tell the emigrant, that from the time he sets sail from your shores he is no more to you than a Dutchman, a Frenchman, or an American. You say to him, wherever you may be placed, you shall be entitled to no favour from us, and you will get from us no protection; you are like all other foreigners, and you are just as much connected with them as with us. We are now upon the question of corn; but apply this general principle to that particular article, and mark the results. Look at the trade with Canada, and see what will be the consequence of the abrogation of the Corn Law. I have heard this put forward as a great boon to our Australian Colonies. I do not exactly see how. At the present moment wheat from the Australian Colonies can be introduced into the market here, subject to a duty which never exceeds 5s. a quarter. Upon the payment of a duty not exceeding 5s., Australia has an exclusive admission to the protected market of this country. You are about to take away the duty of 5s. the quarter,

which prevents Australian corn from being introduced here; and then if corn falls in price 5s. a quarter, so far is Australia from being benefited, that it is placed in a worse position than it was before. And now what have you done with regard to Canada? You introduced a Bill in which you promised to Canada a great advantage in the British market. You presented it to Canada as a protected market; and upon the faith of what you had done, she imposed a duty of 3s. upon corn and flour taken from America. You encouraged Canada to make a large outlay of money in improving the navigation of the St. Lawrence—you even lent her money for that purpose. You are now about to render that outlay valueless—you are going to break the promises held out to Canada—you are going to destroy its trade you fostered and encouraged. Nay, you are going to do much more—you are going to destroy the improved communication of the St. Lawrence. You are going to make the port of New York the channel of commercial intercourse between this country and Upper Canada, instead of your own St. Lawrence. Those who know that Colony know that on this point I speak the truth, and nothing but that—one that ought not to be treated lightly. It is a matter almost of indifference to the grower whether wheat grown in the Western States of the Union and in Upper Canada, is carried to New York or Montreal. The communication with New York is somewhat cheaper and easier. The market of Montreal regulates the price of the markets of New York; but now the corn of the Western States and Upper Canada comes down the St. Lawrence to Montreal, employing British shipping, and that in our own territory, because there is a differential duty in favour of its coming by way of Montreal, and against its coming by way of New York. But if this measure passes that will be changed, and the corn will come, not by your own St. Lawrence, in ships navigated by your own countrymen, but through the United States. And I will tell your Lordships what is the fact: there are merchants in Montreal who, in anticipation of this measure passing, are preparing to set up their establishments in New York. I say nothing of the effect you are producing upon the feelings of the people. I will say nothing of the shock you will give to the loyalty of the people; but I say this, you are doing your utmost to irritate them by the breach of your en-

gagement to them. My Lords, I will not enter into details; but I will venture to remind your Lordships that as political independence may follow closely upon commercial independence, so political dependence on another State may also follow from commercial dependence upon it. Are the United States blind to this fact? Do they not see the nature of your suicidal policy? Are your Lordships aware of the Bill passed by Congress one or two years ago? That a Bill was passed, actually granting a drawback to the full amount, or almost so, of the import duty upon goods going into the seaports of the United States, provided those goods were carried through the United States, and reshipped to Upper Canada; and that a Bill is now pending in Congress for the purpose of extending the import of goods from Canada, to be reshipped to this country from the port of New York? Will that fact of the policy of the United States open your Lordships' eyes to the nature of the policy which you are pursuing? Again, your Lordships have read, or if not, I hope before you come to a decision upon this measure you will read the despatch of the Governor General of Canada. This despatch has been laid on the Table by Her Majesty's Government. It is from their representative, Lord Cuthbert, who has been recently appointed. It is addressed to the Government, not in his own name, but in that of the whole Executive Council of the province of Canada. He thus writes:—

"My attention having been very earnestly called by the members of the Executive Council of this province to the apprehensions they have been led to entertain by discussions which have recently appeared in the English newspapers, pointing strongly to a change in the Corn Laws, I am induced, at their earnest desire, even with no better foundation, to bring the subject under your consideration by the mail which leaves this night, as the opportunities for communication at this season are so infrequent as to produce inconvenient delays. The province of Canada is so vitally interested in the question, that it is a duty of the Executive of the province to urge on the consideration of Her Majesty's Ministers a full statement of the necessity of continuing a protection to the colonial trade in wheat and flour, and of the effect of any changes by which the protection hitherto given would be taken away. The improvement of the internal communications by water in Canada was undertaken on the strength of the advantage of exporting to England our surplus wheat and flour by Quebec. Should no such advantage exist, the revenue of the province to be derived from the tolls would fail. The means of the province to pay principal and interest on the debt guaranteed by England would be diminished, and the general prosperity of the province would

be so materially affected as to reduce its revenue derived from commerce, thus rendering it a possible case that the guarantee given to the public creditors would have to be resorted to by them for the satisfaction of their claims. The larger portion, nearly all, of the surplus produce of Canada, is grown in the western part of it; and if an enactment similar in principle to the Duties Drawback Law should pass Congress, permitting Canadian produce to pass through the United States for shipment, and the English market was open to produce shipped from American ports on as favourable terms as if shipped from Canadian ports, the larger portion of the exports of Upper Canada would find its way through the canals of the State of New York, instead of those of Canada, rendering the St. Lawrence canals comparatively valueless. The effect of the Duties Drawback Law has been to transfer the purchase of sugar, tea, and many other goods to New York, from whence nearly all of those articles for the supply of Upper Canada are now imported. Should such a change in the export of Canadian produce take place, it will not only injure the Canadian canals, and forwarding trade, but also the shipping interest engaged in carrying these articles from Montreal. A change in the Corn Laws, which would diminish the price the Canadian farmers can now obtain, would greatly affect the consumption of British manufactures in the province, which must depend on the means of the farmers to pay for them. An increased demand and consumption has been very perceptible for the last two years, and is mainly attributable to the flourishing condition of the agricultural population of Upper Canada. Even if a relaxation of the system of protection to the Colonies is to be adopted, it is of infinite consequence that it should not be sudden. The ruin that such a proceeding would cause is incalculable. The political consequences as to the government of the Colony involved in the foregoing suggestions are sufficiently obvious, (viz., alienation from the mother country, and annexation to our rival and enemy, the United States,) as also must be those arising from the trade of Upper Canada being, as it were, transferred from Montreal to New York."

I do not wish to urge this matter further. I desire but to show you what effect this Corn Law will have upon the single province of Canada. I have stated the case of Canada and the Corn Laws; and, having shown the effect which this measure will have upon the individual province of Canada, I will not trespass upon your Lordships' attention by entering into details with respect to other Colonies, or the effects which a similar course may have upon them. But there is one other point I must refer to. When we are told it is essential for the advantage of the manufacturers of this country that free trade should be established, and that no advantage should be derived by the Colonies, I presume that if you deprive the Colonies of all the protection they now enjoy, you intend to repeal that Act of Parliament which compels the Colonies to impose a

differential duty in favour of your produce. I can conceive no grosser injustice than your refusal to do that, if you deprive colonial produce of the protection it has hitherto enjoyed. Protection is mutual—free trade must be mutual also. One half, or more than one-third, of your manufactures goes to the Colonies. There you are not exposed to competition. Hear now what is the language of Mr. Greg, a distinguished member of the Anti-Corn-Law League, as to those markets—the neutral markets—in which you are exposed to competition:—

"At present," says Mr. Greg, "we are undersold by foreigners in neutral markets, in all the staple articles of English manufacture. In the articles of cotton, hosiery, and cutlery, which amount altogether to three-fourths of our exports, this is notoriously the case. In cotton fabrics the Swiss undersell us in several markets. In cutlery, Sheffield is immensely undersold by the Alsatians, and our exports are yearly decreasing. In hosiery the case is still worse. Saxony is driving us, not only out of the foreign markets, but out of our own. In hosiery we used to supply three-fourths of the American demand. We now scarcely supply any. Saxon hosiery, after paying a duty of 20 per cent., is sold in London 25 to 30 per cent. cheaper than the produce of the Leicester and Nottingham looms. In Leicester the stocking frames have diminished from 10,000 in 1816, to 14,000 in 1840; whilst in Saxony in the same time they have increased from 4,500 to 25,000. How far," says Mr. Greg, "with cheaper food, no taxes on the raw material, and no duties but for the sake of revenue, we might yet recover our lost superiority, is a matter for grave consideration. I do not believe we could either in woollens or hosiery, and even in cutlery or the cotton trade, I think it very doubtful. The machinery of foreign nations even now is not inferior to our own, and is daily and rapidly improving; and the capital is fast accumulating, and the yearly interest of it approximating to our own rate. In the only remaining cost of production, that is, the wages of labour, foreign nations have a decided advantage; and although a free trade in provisions, by lowering them here and raising them abroad, I doubt if it ever could be entirely recovered, yet better education, more sober habits, more frugality and general forethought, together with cheaper food, will, no doubt, enable our people to live in much greater comfort than at present upon considerably smaller earnings."

This, then, is the language of Mr. Greg, one of the leaders of the Anti-Corn-Law League; and he, on the part of the manufacturers, frankly intimates that the last chance for the success of what is called free trade resolves itself into a reduction of wages and cheapness of food. It is the last desperate experiment, and when you are called upon to give up markets which, because they are protected, take one-third of your manufactures—when you are called upon to do this, to damage the home mar-

ket, the proportion of which I take to be to the whole foreign markets at least as four to one, and this upon the chance of finding markets abroad, I really must say that the force of folly can go no further. I trust that you, my Lords, will not be led away by any fanciful delusions upon this subject. I trust that you will not, in yielding to these delusions, consent to sacrifice the home producer. I am sensible, though I have spoken at great length, how feebly and imperfectly I have performed the duty I desired to discharge. I know that I must have wearied your Lordships; I know that I must have indifferently fulfilled my task; but I do hope that your Lordships will give me credit for having kept closely to the subject; and I hope further, that I have redeemed the pledge that I gave at the outset—that in no observation that I might make, if I could possibly avoid it, would I make use of an expression calculated to wound the feelings of any one. But before I sit down, permit me to address a few words to those amongst your Lordships—and I believe there are many—who in their hearts go along with me in the arguments I have employed, and who regard with the same alarm that I do this measure; and yet who, for various reasons, are prepared to assent to the second reading. I can conceive various motives which may impel highminded and honourable men to take such a course. I know there may be those who feel ready to yield to the authority of the House of Commons—I entertain great respect for the authority of that House, of which I was a Member twenty-two years. But where on this subject am I to discover its authority, and how to collect its opinions? I can but discover them in its recorded votes. Am I to be bound by its votes of 1846, of 1844, or of 1842? When I find that a measure in 1842 was rejected by a majority of 213, and another measure to the same effect, in the same year, rejected by a majority of 114; when I find it rejected by a majority of 256 in 1843, and again by a majority of 209 in 1844, and when I find a Motion for a repeal of the Corn Laws rejected by a majority of 132 in June 1845, and when I find that same measure not negatived by a majority of 132, but affirmed by a majority of 98 by the same men and in the same House—I say that this sudden conversion must tend to diminish the value I attach to the authority of the last vote of the House of Commons. I respect

the judgment and decision of the House of Commons; but not because it is a decision of a majority of Gentlemen more or less educated and enlightened. I respect their decision because it is the decision of the representatives of public opinion in this country; and if I am to take the decision of the House of Commons, I must, if I am to be bound by either decision, take that decision of the collected representation in 1842, rather than that of the collected representation in 1846, as the deliberate judgment and opinion of the people of this country. There are those who disapprove of this decision, but who, from a personal feeling of attachment to the Government, are prepared to vote with them. I sympathize with that feeling, but I cannot assent to the justice of the course. There are too great interests at stake in this question, to be complimented away out of deference to any Minister. Depend upon it, the public interests can never be benefited by the sacrifice of your own deliberate judgment, by turning round upon your own principles for the purpose of saving an Administration. My conviction is, that if you make the sacrifice, it will be made in vain, for there never was a Government which permanently maintained office, much less power, when it rested on the somewhat contemptuous sufferance of its opponents, joined to the ill-concealed disgust, and the lukewarm and half-ashamed support of its adherents. There may be those, my Lords, who hope, by giving their consent to this measure, to put an end to agitation, and to give satisfaction to the members of the Anti-Corn-Law League. When, my Lords, was an organized agitation put down by concessions extorted from its opponents? Depend upon it, that when this body shall have once tasted the cup of political power, the draught will be too sweet to induce them to relinquish it. I agree with my noble Friend, that this is only one of the measures which one after another will be the object of the Anti-Corn-Law League. Why, my Lords, there is no secret made of it. I do not say that every member of the Anti-Corn-Law League enters fully into those opinions; for I believe that there are many excellent men who have joined that body with none but commercial objects—who sincerely believe that free trade will be a benefit to the country and to themselves, and who would withdraw if there were any attempt to carry those objects further. But recollect, that agitation, having succeeded in one object, is not a

thing easy to put down. Here is the language used by one of the free traders at a meeting held in this city, at which a Mr. Lawrence Heyworth was in the chair:—

"They were told of the wonders that resulted from public opinion, that it was performing something like miracles, converting Prime Ministers to right principles; but they must have something more than free trade in corn, fresh meat, and vegetables. The discussions which had taken place had enlightened the public, and they would begin to ask, why continue a system of levying taxes by which the trade of the country is decreased, and the comforts of the people lessened? Men would begin to ask whether it would not be better to have one tax—a tax on property—to carry on the Government of the country? Whether it would not be better to abolish the Custom-house system, to do away with the preventive force altogether, and to put up a board on the sea-coast with these words—'Honest traders of all nations may land their stuff here. No taxes. No duties.'"

In further allusion to the great principles of free trade, he said—

"They had lived to see their triumph in the most extraordinary way, but he would not have the friends of free trade to relax in their endeavours. They must remember the House of Lords yet lived. It was still the stronghold of the aristocracy. They were struggling now for something more than the maintenance of the present commercial policy. They had a sure conviction that free trade would not only give the people more comfort, but more independence, and this was the thing they feared. Commercial and trading liberty would promote intelligence, and give an increased impulse to those great principles of civil and religious liberty on which this country was placing its affections. After the settlement of the free-trade question, the people would then have more time to agitate for the great principle of universal suffrage. If it is good," said he, "for commerce to be free, it is good for man to be free. If it is good for cotton and corn to be free, it is good for man to be free. Gradually, human life was becoming of more importance—the very gallows was becoming odious. Everything which weakened the aristocracy, and increased the intelligence of the people, must be in favour of this noble and Christian principle."

And I beg the attention of the right rev. Bench to this passage:—

"Could they have free trade in commerce without free trade in religion; or could, under such a system, ecclesiastical despotism continue to blight our country? The time was not far distant when Catholics and Dissenters would ask, 'Why shall the Church of Christ continue to be bandaged by the trammels of the State? Why shall the ministers of the gospel be compelled to wear the State's livery?' Freedom in religion, as displayed in the entire separation of Church and State, will be one of the glorious effects of free trade."

Lastly, my Lords, there is another motive which is most likely to operate with highminded men; it is an unworthy fear of the suspicion that they are acting from

interested or dishonourable motives. My Lords, if I were speaking of an ordinary assembly, I might warn them of the danger of yielding to such motives; but speaking to the assembly which I have the honour to address, I feel that I should rather warn you against a bias in the opposite direction—against assenting to a measure injurious both to the public and to your own interests, lest you should be unjustly suspected of interested motives. My Lords, you have no right to yield to such considerations. You are the trustees for far more than your personal interests: you are the trustees for your country; you are the trustees for posterity; you are the trustees for the Constitution of the Empire. My Lords, you each, and all of you, live amongst your neighbours, by whom you are looked up to as the guides for their political opinions; from you your neighbours take the colour of their opinions and their views; to you they look, to your opinions a respectful deference is paid, and it is you who have encouraged and promulgated the opinion that for the great interests of the country agricultural protection is essential. With what feeling, my Lords, with what face, having voted for the destruction of all protection to agriculture, can you show yourselves in the midst of those neighbours who have hitherto regarded you with respect, and whose principles and opinions you have heretofore influenced? They will charge you, and charge you justly, as you now charge the Government, with having misled and betrayed those who have placed their confidence in you. Therefore, my Lords, if against your own deliberate opinions you consent to pass this measure, be prepared to abdicate the hitherto high place you have held in the Constitution; if you sacrifice your own opinions to the intimidation of faction, the allurements of power, or the dictation of any Minister on earth, be prepared hereafter to be looked upon as a subordinate branch of the Constitution, to be looked upon only as the registrars of the edicts of the House of Commons, and as the pliant followers of the Minister of the day. My Lords, if I know anything of the constitutional value of this House, it is to interpose a salutary obstacle to rash and inconsiderate legislation; it is to protect the people from the consequences of their own imprudence. It never has been the course of this House to resist a continued and deliberately formed public opinion; your Lordships always have bowed,

and always will bow, to the expression of such an opinion; but it is yours to check hasty legislation, leading to irreparable evils; and it is yours—though the Constitution can hardly have been deemed to have provided for such a contingency—to protect the people, not against their own hasty judgments, but against the treachery of those whom they have chosen to be their representatives. My Lords, if acting on your own deliberate and impartial opinion, scorning the degrading suspicion of being actuated by unworthy motives—you follow the course which, in your consciences, you believe to be for the good of the country, you may fail in effecting your purpose, but you will not be condemned; overborne by numbers you may be, but not degraded. You may not succeed in averting the threatened evil; but you will secure the approbation of your friends, and compel the respect of your opponents. And if, by the blessing of God, your decision on this great question shall arrest the progress of this hasty and inconsiderate measure; if you shall thus give time for the intelligence of the country to act upon the public mind; if happily you shall succeed in leading back the country to a wiser course, and in adopting the too much despised wisdom of your ancestors, then will you justly be a “proud aristocracy;” proud of having faithfully discharged the duty vested in you by the Constitution; proud of having withstood alike the seductions of power, and the threats of popular clamour; proud of having succeeded in saving your country from this great delusion, this hazardous and fearful experiment. Your best reward, my Lords, will be the approval of your own consciences; but doubt not but that you will have a farther reward in the approbation of a grateful and admiring nation, to which you will have given just cause to exclaim, “Thank God, we have a House of Lords!”

LORD BROUGHAM: My Lords, you have heard a speech of singular ability, but delivered at so late a period in the evening, that whoever has to answer it may more justly complain of the time it took to deliver, than the ability it displayed; for amongst the many great advantages which my noble Friend enjoys over me, advantages which I need not stop to enumerate, because all who have heard his admirable speech must at once feel to what I allude; but amongst those advantages, which intrinsically belong to him at all times, and at all hours

of the night, he certainly has one advantage over me which is purely accidental, but which upon this occasion is equal to all his other advantages put together. He has made a most exciting, a most animated, a most spirited, and, over a large portion of your Lordships, a most successful speech; but it was also a very long speech—though I did not feel that it was long, or that it stood in need of those apologies for its length which he frequently addressed to us—so long that it makes me rise to address you, not at nine o'clock of the evening as he did, but at past twelve o'clock at night. This is a great disadvantage in any assembly, and more especially in this House, where we are not accustomed to protracted debates; but it teaches me one lesson—of some use to your Lordships—that of confining myself within narrow limits, and proceeding at once without further preface to the question. I trust, my Lords, as I am about to address myself not to those Members of the House with whom I agree, but to those with whom I have the great misfortune to differ, that I shall be favoured with some portion of attention, whilst I apply myself to answer my noble Friend. I wave with my noble Friend all personal allusions. He did well to keep them out of his speech. I will follow his example. But there is one subject of a personal nature I cannot pass over, and I will begin with it. I mean as to the origin of the present measure. [*Cry of “Adjourn.”*] I beg pardon of noble Lords for interrupting them. I have a duty to perform; and if they have any duties to perform elsewhere, and especially if they think it becoming to listen to the arguments upon one side, and decline to hear a reply from the other, perhaps the sooner they go elsewhere to the discharge of those other duties, or to the tasting of those other enjoyments which they may prefer to anything here, or to the discharge of any duty, peradventure the House will not be the worse for their absence, and they themselves will very greatly profit by the move, which I recommend, and which I see they are with exemplary candour and justice taking advantage of. I beg to say a word in reference to my noble Friend, to whom I paid undivided attention, and from whom I promise to require not so much as one-third the attention that he exacted from the House upon the origin of the present question. I will proceed at once to the origin of the present measure. It is said to be the pressure of the famine, or

the supposed famine, in certain districts in Ireland. My Lords, I doubt the fact of there being any general famine in Ireland. I have never heard it stated to be general; but that there was a great scarcity, a topical scarcity in many large districts, is a fact as certain as that we are sitting here in debate on this measure to-night. Then, says my noble Friend, that is no reason, it furnishes no sufficient ground, for doing away with protection, or for even opening the ports, as has been recommended. My Lords, I deny that fact; and I am ready to show by facts that it does. But I beg to observe in the outset, it is perfectly immaterial to the merits of this Bill what was the origin of it. I might most consistently, if I were so disposed, say it was wrong to bring in the Bill this year—I might most consistently maintain, there is no ground for precipitating this measure with the speed with which it has been brought forward; I might admit that I can see no ground whatever for making us pass it in the year 1846. I might most consistently urge that Sir R. Peel did a rash, a speculative, and if you will, a most improper act by bringing in this Bill this year. Yet whenever introduced, under whatever pressure, however indiscreetly, I care not one whit; and if, upon the merits of the measure itself, I hold it to be a sound one, I am bound, as an honest man, to give it my support; else why did I urge the same policy when I brought forward the question in 1839? I state this in the outset, to guard myself against being supposed to depend upon extraneous and accidental circumstances as the ground, the real ground of my approval of this measure. But I am also free to admit that I see nothing superfluous, nothing rash or indiscreet, in the choice of the last autumn or the last winter, as the time for first proposing it. For what was the real state of the case as regarded the potato disease? Vast numbers of persons, my noble Friend admits, found themselves reduced to great distress by the failure of their crops; those persons having not merely their potatoes bad, but having no other wages wherewithal to pay for food except the produce of their little plots of ground, that unhappily being the currency, as it were, in which Irish labour is mainly paid. Are your Lordships aware what has happened since this measure was originated? Is my noble Friend ignorant of what has happened since it was introduced into the other House? He omitted to notice it, but surely he is aware

of the change which has taken place—namely, that one part of the measure which naturally belonged to the Corn Law has been transferred therefrom, and inserted in the Customs Bill, and by the force of that change there has been already effected an importation of foreign maize? Maize has been allowed to be imported, as if the Corn Bill had been passed, and we are now enjoying the benefit of the alteration. How does that apply to my noble Friend's argument, who says that this measure is unnecessary, and mischievous, and speculative, and that as a remedy it will not meet the case to which it is applied? Why, it does meet the case to which it has been applied, for it is in order to provide for the wants created by the diseased potato crop that maize has been introduced; and those connected with the sister kingdom will tell your Lordships that they have been thankfully feeding not their cattle merely, but the poor peasants of the country with it. Therefore the measure has even already been applied, and successfully. Then, says my noble Friend—and no part of his able and excellent address appeared to me to excite greater approbation than this, for it led away some Friends near me for a moment, but only for a moment—"Why you lead the poor Irish peasant to see that because his potatoes are useless, you take away the protection from his corn—you make him sell his corn cheaper, so that he burns his candle at both ends. You do not give him food to supply the loss of his potatoes; but you take away his means of purchasing both food and potatoes by cheapening his oats." No part of my noble Friend's speech made a greater impression than this. But at last came the answer to it in my noble Friend's own conduct; for he admitted candidly, that he was perfectly ready to have opened the ports, and for a period to have let in oatmeal, to lower the value of the Irish peasant's oats, thus lowering the price of his produce, lessening his means of procuring food, and doing himself the very thing at the bare prospect of which he trembled so greatly, if this measure became law. I only mention this, as one little instance, to show that my noble Friend had no right to charge others so lavishly, and, as he did upon all sides, with inconsistency; to remind him that he had better look at home when he launched such accusations. He said he was afraid he could not confine that charge to those

who sat upon one side of the House, but that it applied just as much to those who sat upon the other. Is not my noble Friend himself a little liable to the same charge? I do not say I bring it as a charge against him—far from it. But he charged all around with inconsistency. He says, the Ministers are paragons of inconsistency; but he does not let the Gentlemen of the Opposition triumph over them, for he says they have been as inconsistent themselves. But, has my noble Friend none to account for himself? In the first instance, here is this little inconsistency, whereby he entirely subverts the most eminently successful part of his whole speech, that of the potatoes and oats in the case of the Irish peasant. Is there nothing else? Has my noble Friend forgotten the Canada Bill? Has he forgotten what was done in the Canada Bill of last Session or the Session before? I highly approved of that Bill—I heartily supported it. I defend the consistency now as I did then of those who had their consistency then impeached; I defend men of all sides from my noble Friend's charge; but among others, I defend my noble Friend himself, the author of the Bill. He has accused all, but none more than himself. What was that Bill? It was a free-trade Corn Bill for Canada; it was a Bill giving Canada corn-law repeal; it reduced the duty upon the importation of American bread stuffs in that Colony to 3s.; it allowed the whole of those American bread stuffs imported into Canada to be brought over to England—where the Corn Law still existed—where protection was still in being—and where protection was still said to be absolutely necessary to the landlord, the tenant, the peasant, the labourer, the manufacturer, the aristocracy, and to all our institutions. Without protection we could not continue to exist; all those ranks of the people, all those classes of the nation, were to enjoy the full benefit of corn-law protection just as much as ever they did. Yet there was exactly 1s. duty and no more laid on, be the price ever so low, and no sliding scale at all was applied. No sliding scale was to range, as in the Bill of 1842, which my noble Friend supports to this day; and, whatever the price might be, whatever was admitted, at any port, was admitted at the nominal duty of 1s. the quarter. What is the reason? That reason my Noble Friend gives. I do not mention this to taunt my noble Friend with inconsistency, but to show that *ne-*

mo omnibus horis sapit, there is no one who acts the part of a wise man at all times—if wisdom is to consist, as we now are told, in clinging by whatever has once been appointed, and it be true that no one acts the part of a wise man but he who refuses to profit by reflection and further experience. If, then, there is no one upon any side free from inconsistency, is my noble Friend himself totally free from the charge of having at different times been a party to opposite measures? But it is not to point out that, for it would be to a useless purpose, that I rise; but to show that the argument by which my noble Friend supported the Canada Bill is applicable to the present measure. “Think,” says he, “of Canada, of the increase of population; consider how rapidly the numbers of our people are augmenting from day to day; think of England, and that every year are added between 300,000 and 400,000 to the numbers of the consumers of food in this country, and that, unless you bring down that food to the lowest possible price, you cannot hope long to feed those increasing numbers, and you cannot discharge your duties to your country.” My Lords, the same argument applied to the Corn Law at all times; and it is upon that ground of its applicability at all times, and without reference to accidental or temporary circumstances, that those I act with now are, and that I have ever been, the advocate of free trade. This leads me to observe—and here I come at once to the point which is the main stress of the question—upon the probable effect of the repeal of the Corn Laws in reducing prices. I wish I could take the same view that my noble Friend does. I heartily wish I could believe in the possibility of one-fifth part falling—that I could believe in 20 per cent. of the price of grain being taken off by the repeal of the duty. The Government are charged by my noble Friend who spoke from the cross benches, as well as by my noble Friend opposite, with having refused to answer this question—what effect is the repeal of the Corn Law likely to produce on prices? I should have thought a more difficult question to answer could not have been propounded by any noble Lord. Why, to tell what increase or diminution of prices will take place in any given article at a distance of two or three years, the law, the commercial policy, the national relations remaining unchanged, is one of the

problems the most difficult in the whole universe to answer. What must it be, then, when its conditions are unascertained—when there will be a change of considerable magnitude in the nature and amount of your importation, and you literally have not the data, do not and cannot possess the means of forming any just calculation? Observe: wheat is now selling, we shall assume, at 30s. in Dantzic under the existing law; the question is, how cheap it will sell in England when the Corn Laws are repealed? In order to tell you that, you must be able to tell what will be the effect of the English markets being open on the market of Dantzic. The question is not whether it is now sold at 40s. in Dantzic, but what will be its price after the ports are opened in England? Can any man doubt that the immediate effect of opening the ports here will be to raise the price of grain in foreign ports? But then, says my noble Friend, a great deal of new land will be brought into cultivation. But your Lordships must not suppose that this is an operation so easily accomplished in all the countries of Europe as it is in Middlesex or Bucks. We constantly hear of the clearing of land in the Ukraine, in the countries surrounding the Baltic, or in Hungary, as if it were the easiest matter possible. I do not know if my noble Friend knows less about Hungary than the Ukraine—probably he does not know more; but if he inquires of any Hungarian nobleman now in England as to the possibility of suddenly clearing such a breadth of land as to export to this country 500,000 quarters more than are now exported from Odessa and the ports of the Danube, I believe he will find that he reckons quite without his host. Just consider for a moment what is the operation to which some look forward with such alarm. It is that acre after acre shall be suddenly cleared away, if covered with forests, by stubbing up the trees, digging out of the roots, and getting rid of all the timber, so as to convert it into arable soil instead of thick woodland; then that fences and inclosures shall be made, that roads should be made, that barns and other buildings shall be constructed. Can that be done without a numerous host of skilled labourers, such as is not to be obtained at once? Will the population of those countries go on increasing at the rate at which yours is augmenting, of one thousand a day? That is not all; capital is required, and where is it to come from?

The slowest of all growths is that of national capital. It is stated that in this country every tenant, to cultivate a farm already in cultivation, must have capital to the amount of 10*l.* an acre, 1,000*l.* on a hundred acres. But how much per acre will it require in the Ukraine or in Hungary to clear a primitive farm, and to bring it out of a state of nature into a state of culture? My noble Friend, however, supports his argument upon the authority of his respectable correspondent, (I suppose Mr. Sanders,) and upon the authority of that gentleman my noble Friend tells your Lordships that the effect of this Bill will be to cause the cultivation of 5,000,000 additional quarters.

LORD STANLEY: No; it was not Mr. Sanders. That writer said, if the price should be from 36s. to 40s. within three years, there would be a supply of 5,000,000 quarters from abroad.

LORD BROUGHAM: Why, that is just the same thing. My noble Friend is a little fatigued by his speech, and has not recovered his faculties, otherwise he would have said yes instead of no. There is no difference.

LORD STANLEY: There is the difference between suddenly and three years.

LORD BROUGHAM: That "no" is in effect "yes"—my noble Friend seems to say no, but really the effect of his answer is an affirmative, and the result is that I am right and he is wrong—three years! Surely in talking prospectively of the eternal interests of trade, three years are but as an instant. When we are dealing with that which has endured since the time of Henry IV., to which my noble Friend referred us, any thing that depends upon a period of three years may well be called sudden—it is most sudden. No doubt that writer is a respectable correspondent, but I wish he was a little more sensible. I do not require that he should be a man of powerful intellect or large views, because he is not giving any opinion; but I am entitled to require that he should be a rational man, seeing that he speaks to matters of fact. If I am called upon to be governed by his authority, I must be satisfied that he is trustworthy; I must have no reason to suspect any lack of judgment; I must be convinced that he is able to put two ideas together; I must require him to be in his sound senses; and yet when I consider the correspondence of this gentleman, I cannot repress feelings of the utmost astonishment at

the monstrous fables which he tells. Of all the blunders in the way of calculation, I never in all my life heard one so monstrous, portentous, and incredible as this, that in the short space of three years, nay, if you will, three years and three days, as the lawyers are accustomed to say, 5,000,000 quarters are to be added to the produce of the cultivation of foreign countries, and to be poured into our ports to overwhelm our markets, to deluge our agriculture, and destroy our industry. I believe nothing of the sort. Any increase in the growth of corn from Ukraine, Hungary, or the forests of Poland, must of necessity be gradual and slow. No application of capital and labour can for years be expected, such as to make it possible greatly to augment the supply. No application of capital can for years be expected equal to the management of those lands, and the carrying on of those extensive works. Consequently, we must calculate on a very moderate decrease of prices, and a very slowly augmented supply to meet our demands. At the same time, I by no means intend to argue that there will be no diminution of prices, though I perfectly recollect that a noble Friend of mine, now no more—I mean the late Lord Spencer—held that such a change in the Corn Laws as is now proposed, would not effect any diminution whatever in the price of provisions. That was his deliberate and serious opinion; and though I have always thought that that opinion was entitled to the highest respect, like every other opinion entertained by that noble person, I still hold that there was in it something of exaggeration; and my expectation is that in the price of corn there will be a small, a moderate reduction after the passing of this Bill. But there is a class of men to whom I may appeal—and my noble Friends on the cross benches will surely join me, for there is no class to whom they appeal more willingly, or for whom they profess greater respect—I mean the tenant farmers. Now, it does happen that the tenant farmers, whatever the landlords who care for their interests so zealously may think, have no such apprehensions. I state it as a fact that, generally speaking, if you inquire in different parts of the country, you will find that the great bulk of the tenant farmers labour under no apprehensions, though I believe there is no class more likely to be sensitive. I have made it my business to inquire practically into

the feeling among them in different districts, and the result of my examination is that they are not apprehensive of a change. If they are apprehensive, they take extraordinary pains to disguise their fears, and adopt the most singular mode of showing that they are tremblingly alive to the dangers of their present position. For what do your Lordships think they do, in order to show that they dread the repeal of the Corn Laws, and tremble at surveying the ruin it is likely to produce? They take farms when they are out of lease without any hesitation. Wherever the land happens to get out of lease, is it not a fact that the applicant for it has invariably some half a dozen competitors? But then, perhaps, there is a reduction of rent? There is no such thing. The fact is directly the reverse. My noble Friend (the Duke of Richmond), who seems to regard my statement with very great contempt, has no doubt a right to despise my opinion, he having very great experience in such matters, and I very small experience; but I can assure him that in all parts of the country where I have been able to make inquiries I have learned that instances have occurred of farms having been let at an increase of rent, while there has not been any instance of the rent having been lowered in consequence of any apprehensions arising from this measure; and what is more, that there has not been any instance in which there was not a number of competitors for the land to be let. In Durham, a friend of mine asked some tenant farmers who were about taking land, whether they were not aware of what was going on in Parliament, and whether they were not afraid of the risk which they ran in entering upon fresh engagements with their landowners; and their answer was, "Oh, we have taken it all into account, and we have no fear whatever of the result." In one instance an advance in the rental of a farm had been made of 70*l.*, and in another of 120*l.* a year. My noble Friend the Chairman of the Committees has had some experience in these matters, and he can, I believe, bear me out in what I say as regards Dorsetshire; and I can assure my noble Friend at the Table (Earl Stanhope), who seems to doubt these facts, that precisely the same state of things is to be found in the county of Wilts. As to the certain results of this measure, I certainly would form a very mean opinion of the judgment or the modesty of any one who

should take upon himself to say confidently that he could form a precise opinion of the result of the measure. We should speak with great moderation on the expectations that are to be formed of the effects of this or of any other great change. That prices may to a certain degree be diminished, I will not deny; but what the precise amount of price under this measure will be no one can say. I have little doubt that, to a certain degree, wheat will be cheaper, not immediately, but after a little while, and in the course of years it will come down, perhaps, 3s. or 4s. a quarter; but I speak with no kind of confidence. When I mention this amount, I do not mean to pledge myself to calculation of the precise sum, for I think nothing would be more absurd or conceited than for a man to take upon himself to express such an opinion dogmatically. I only mean to say that the change of price from this great measure is not likely to be more than the amount I have now suggested. But that is not the main ground of my approval of the measure. I am confident that the agriculturists will benefit much more in other respects than they will apparently lose by any reduction in price from this great improvement in the laws; for I look forward to the measure as one which is certain almost immeasurably to extend the foreign trade of the country in a very short period. Before, however, I come to that part of my noble Friend's statement—and here I must say that some of these statements put forward by my noble Friend have rather puzzled me, and I hope we shall receive a little more light from the noble Lord hereafter, either in or out of the House, for they have left me perfectly in the dark—I wish, before alluding to them, to turn to another part of the speech of my noble Friend. My noble Friend has again and again stated, both by quotations and in his own language—which is certainly not inferior, but is really superior to the language of the authorities that he has cited—that the object of all laws of protection is to make this country independent of foreign supply with regard to the article of food; and among others he quoted Mr. Huskisson as having been of that opinion. Now there can be no doubt whatever that the interest of this country and of every other country requires that the bulk of the food of the people shall be grown within the country. With the exception of the United Provinces of Holland, there is no instance where the

people are not of necessity fed by the corn grown within the bounds of their own country; and, as far as England is concerned, the utmost you can expect from abroad is relief in a time of scarcity, or a supply to diminish the dearth of a bad year. Even in years of famine there never have been two millions of quarters of wheat brought in one year into the country. In 1800 and 1801, the supply for each year was only 1,100,000 quarters of corn, and 200,000 quarters of flour, or about a million and a quarter of quarters altogether; and in the year of the greatest supply, 1810, there were not more than 1,500,000 quarters imported. Why, therefore, do you wish to continue these restrictions? And why do you say that the people of this country ought to be independent of the people of other countries for the supply of food? Oh, it is said, foreign Powers may change their law, alter their policy, and, at any moment, close their ports and starve you. I have an answer to that in one word; I point to 1810, and I say that your argument survives not the mention of that year one single instant. When did you ever see the Continent under such a power as that to which it bowed in 1810? When, ever again, are you likely to see it enthralled by such a mighty hand as that which then grasped the universal sceptre of Europe—I may say, of the continental world? Do you remember what year that was? Talk to me of petty Sovereigns now stopping exportation from Egypt, from Belgium, from Antwerp, from the Hague: why, then, Napoleon, in his iron grasp, held, as I said before, the sceptre, not of France only, but of all continental Europe; and do you remember the degree to which he had enforced his despotism over these States? Why, from the very centre as it were—from the heart, the pulsations of which vibrated all through Europe—from Paris to the extremities of the Continent, he could send forth an edict to shut all Europe against us. From the Channel to the Gulf of Leghorn, from Paris to the uttermost plains of Poland, there was not one single person in authority, not a troop of horse, not a company of foot, not a custom-house officer, not an exciseman, not a policeman, who did not tremble at his name, or who dared question or condemn his mandate. Is that likely to happen again? Did that ever happen before? And yet, what was the result of it all? Was Napoleon bent upon any single thing so much as destroying the

trade of England? Was he bent upon any one project so much, was anything so dear to his heart, as sealing up our own produce, and preventing any one bushel of corn ever reaching this country? And yet the result of it was that 1,250,000 quarters, or, including flour, 1,514,000 quarters, were imported into England during that same year—1810, being greater than ever reached us in any one year. And not from outports, observe, where his power might be supposed to be somewhat weakened; not from Odessa, where he had least influence; not from Africa, where, it may be said, he had none; not from Naples, where his strength was unimportant; not from Sicily, the olden granary of Rome—no; no such thing; but 99 parts in every 100 of those 1,514,000 quarters came from France itself—from thence imported into this country. The mention of that year, 1810, at once extinguishes the argument, and lays it prostrate before me. The noble Lord said the protection system was supported by universal consent. He quoted our own law to show how deep a root it had taken. But if we are to go back upon old statutes, I could furnish the noble Lord with many examples of as ludicrous statutes, of as absurd provisions, as he could wish to see, which the wisdom of our ancestors, to which he so eloquently referred, fixed in the Statute-book, and carefully preserved for our amusement and our wonder, if not for our instruction. The laws against forestalling and regrating were once said to be the pillar of our commercial prosperity. These are things now laughed at by universal consent. But it was no laughing matter when those laws were in force; it was an offence for people to forestall and regrade, and men were punished by imprisonment for committing that offence: no man could buy standing crops; no man could purchase corn for the purpose of selling it again at market; no man could purchase corn before it came to market—there was to be no middleman. The object was that the good, worthy, honest tenant farmer should come to market that he might sell corn cheap to the people. The law said, “You shan’t buy corn to sell again;” and the same rule was applied in the case of hops. But, said the noble Lord, other countries have the same law. Are not these, he triumphantly asks, the great countries of the world? And have they not laws for the protection of native industry? Another part of the noble

Lord’s speech gave the answer to this argument, that notwithstanding their protection law, they all had found it necessary, when there was a pressure on the means of subsistence, to suspend that protection law. The protection laws of Belgium, of Holland, of Egypt, were all suspended in the autumn of 1845. It was no bad or useless commentary upon the inefficient nature of any system of laws, that those countries were obliged to get rid of them the moment the pinch came. My noble Friend then argued that the trade of the country was not likely to be benefited by this great measure; and here I may defend him against himself; because anything more unfeeling, more harsh, more cruel, I should say more uncharitable—nay, I should almost say unchristian—than his treatment of himself in his argument on the Tariff, I never witnessed. I could not have believed that any one would have had so little bowels of compassion as the noble Lord showed toward himself. I pitied him. My noble Friend is so great an artist that he drew himself in such colours that I sorrowed for him. I was forced to separate the two individuals. There is one active and one passive—the party punishing and the party punished—and yet it is one and the same person who punishes and is punished. I wish to say one word, if not in defence, at least in extenuation, to rescue him from the severity of the merciless infliction with which he has been visiting himself. The Tariff, his own Tariff, did not deserve all the vituperation which it received at his hands; and I wish to say one word in its favour before sentence is recorded. No rational man would say as he charged some reasoners with alleging, that increased competition among producers tends to increase prices. By increased competition among producers you reduce prices. But the object of the Tariff was to enable you to obtain cheaper goods from abroad, and to enable you thereby to send your own produce more advantageously to foreign parts. The noble Lord said the Tariff afforded no precedent for the present measure. “See,” he said, “with all your Tariff of 1842, to what it is come! What advantages then do you expect from a repeal of the Corn Laws?” Very great advantage, I should reply, because that repeal will extend further over foreign trade already increased exceedingly by the Tariff. I must refer to the argument as to the increase of seamen, and the diminution of the tonnage of vessels. It is said,

taking so many years before the Tariff was adopted, your vessels in the Baltic trade were so much; taking a similar period since, they are so much less. The proportion was somewhere about 6,400 to 5,300. That was a very trifling diminution; and if the means of transport were made up by foreign vessels, your trade was so far extended; these foreign vessels carried your goods, and we find that the difference before and after the Tariff is made up with a vengeance; for the number indicating the increase of foreign shipping engaged in your trade after the Tariff is 17,000. This is a most complete demonstration that our trade has increased, for in whatever ships it is driven the traffic is exceedingly increased. Then my noble Friend called on noble Lords to attend to a report of the American Secretary of the Treasury; and as I may have found an ex-secretary wrong, so I may find an actual secretary equally wrong. The statement which the noble Lord read does not prove that we take less from the United States than the United States take from us. Did they get what was stated as imports for nothing? You must pay the balance in bullion, or in goods. Did we send 2,500,000 dollars to clear off the balance? No, we paid it in foreign produce. It is what is called a "roundabout" trade, and is almost as profitable as a direct trade. Then we are told the same thing occurs in Russia. About 11,000,000*l.* were imported from Russia; 8,000,000*l.* only were exported to Russia; there was a balance of 3,000,000*l.* Are we to believe that, the Americans having made us a present of two and a half millions of dollars, the Russians have been very anxious to vie with them in kind generosity, giving us three millions sterling of their goods for nothing; as if the two hemispheres were emulating the one the other—the West endeavouring to prove to the world that she is able to excel all that has been told us of the "gorgeous East with richest hand?" But we have received no such gifts from either of them. If we have not sent them our own goods, we have given them the coffee and the sugars of Brazil. But, my Lords, what is my expectation with regard to the Corn Law, so far as relates to foreign trade? I do not look forward to any rapid, sudden, instantaneous increase of our traffic with foreign countries; but one thing I confidently expect, that if we set the example, and remove the restrictions from our commercial code, other countries

will follow the same line. We do not live in a period when any country, especially countries like France and Belgium, with constitutional Governments, or Germany, which is likely soon to obtain constitutional Government—countries where the voice of the consumer is heard, and the opinions of the capitalist and the manufacturer are consulted—are likely to remain behind; those countries, you may be perfectly assured, if you withdraw your restrictions and change your narrow illiberal line of policy, will effect a corresponding change in theirs. Of this also I am certain, that you can do yourselves no kind of service by retaining your restrictions; even should the improvements of this system be postponed by other countries, you will be none the worse for it; while, if your example be followed by them, it will be a most important and valuable benefit for this country. I am not one of those who take the gloomy view of the subject that Mr. Greg and the correspondent of the noble Lord had done. If ever I heard a statement of opinion—and I had never heard that before—touching any subject, and on any occasion which seemed to be made under the influence of the prevailing bias of a man's mind, it is that statement of Mr. Greg. According to him, we are plunged into the abyss of ruin: our capitalists make no profit, our manufacturers are undersold, labour is so dear that there is hardly any chance of obtaining it cheap enough to enable us to enter into competition with the labour of any country, placed in more happy circumstances. But if we are in such desperate condition that there is not an article nor a market in which the foreigner does not undersell us, as Mr. Greg thinks, how is it that our exports have gone on increasing from year to year, till last year they were greater than before? My noble Friend has at great and much more needless length dwelt on the vast amount of our trade—a fact wholly beside the main question, because both sects equally admit it; but it is fatal to Mr. Greg's alarms, though to the argument on the present measure it had no more application than to any other Bill, public or private, of the Session. Before I sit down I wish to say a word upon the sliding scale. My noble Friend, although he did not say much in favour of the Tariff, did speak in favour of the sliding scale; and he asked why alter a system which had been approved as working so advantageously? That argument, at least, does

not apply to me, because I never approved of the sliding scale; it is strictly an *argumentum ad hominem* to those who did so approve it. I never did; and my argument against it was this—that the immediate and inevitable consequence of a sliding scale is, a great accumulation of corn in the foreign ports, or in the bonding warehouses, ready to pour in upon us, and thus all of a sudden the market is flooded, and drenched, and overwhelmed with the influx at the very moment when the home grower can least bear up against it. But let me remind my noble Friend, that the years which have passed since 1842 are not such as could test the sliding scale. The test of the sliding scale is the pinch of a year of scarcity. We have happily no such thing. In the year 1842 there was a good crop; in 1843, a better; and that of 1844 was the best of all—the best known for a long time. The crop of 1845, although not excellent as to quality, was not deficient as to quantity; while that of 1844 was so amply abundant that no less than three months' consumption of the produce of that year would remain after the harvest of 1845 had been gathered. Under those circumstances can any man possibly argue the merits of the sliding scale as regulating the price and maintaining steadiness in the market upon the experience of facts? The case has never arisen, and the sliding scale may have all the merits that have been attributed to it; but they have not yet been proved to us by any kind of experience. My Lords, I have argued this case as I always have done, with a total abstinence from inflammatory topics. Your Lordships will bear me witness as to the manner in which I brought it forward some years ago. In the same spirit I argue it now. I am no party to the follies and exaggerations regarding this subject which I have observed to prevail out of doors. I am no party to the abuse which I have seen heaped upon the landowners of this country. My Lords, I view the landed interest of England as the great, the substantial, the most important of all the interests it contains. I regard the advocates of that interest with unalterable affection and respect. Even where I differ from them in opinion, and do not join with them in the conclusions they arrive at, I view them as performing a great, a conscientiously discharged duty to their country. Above all, I deny that the supporters of the landed interest in this realm are only to be numbered

by the landlords and the tenants, the yeomen, and those who are more immediately engaged in the cultivation of our soil. The great landed interest of this country is of weight, and of power, and of influence enough to counterbalance all the other interests, if they were put into the scales, the one against the other. That has ever been my fixed and decided opinion. But they are not to be put in opposite scales; for there are ranged on the side of the landed interest, not perhaps the middling merchants and petty tradesmen, although the tradesmen in the country towns will always be found ranked with it, but all the great traders, all the great capitalists, all the important mercantile men in the kingdom, all the great mercantile bodies, the Bank, the India Company, the Insurance Companies—the Railway Companies, the Law, the Church, the Army, the Navy—all those bodies forming the prodigious mass of the whole power, and wealth, and influence of England; one and all are found for the most part, and in the main, and in the long run to take part with the landed interest as the great Conservative body of England, the guardians of the institutions of this Empire. Therefore, my Lords, be sure, that when I have made up my mind to support this measure of Corn Law repeal, for the purpose of taking away what I think is most fallaciously thought to be, and what they erroneously call, natural and necessary protection, be well assured, with these opinions which I hold, and have ever held, that, regarding the vast importance of the landed interest, I am the last man in the world to give a consent to this measure if I thought, by its passing, that the interest, the safety, the security of that great body were placed in jeopardy. But that, my Lords, is not my view; and when I am told that our institutions require this protection, and that without this protection of raising a little the price of food—and if it be to raise it but 1s. a quarter, it is a poll-tax paid by every man in the country; and suppose you wanted to raise a million and a quarter, is not that the last tax you would have recourse to, however much you stood in need of it, ay, though the maintenance of your fleets and your armies were endangered—is not a poll-tax even of 1s. the very last that any man in his senses would propose in order to raise the necessary supplies? And yet if the Corn Law keeps up the price of the subsistence of the people only 1s. a quarter, it is a poll-tax upon

every man, rich and poor, in the kingdom. Therefore, my Lords, although I do not consider that the protection of the landed aristocracy requires such measures, or that they are essential, as has been fantastically supposed, to the preservation of our precious, our immemorial institutions, though, on the contrary, it is my opinion that the sooner such measures are done away with the better will it be for the interests of that aristocracy, and the more secure will be those institutions, I will tell the landed aristocracy where to look, if they would find protection for themselves and a bulwark for those institutions. Let them rely upon themselves. *Si munimentum quaris circumspice*. Look around at the display of talent which has been evoked by the discussion of this great question to-night, which was evoked by the debates elsewhere, and let those blush for shame, if they are capable of doing so, who ever ventured to talk with contempt of the talents, the accomplishments, the acquirements of the aristocracy of this country. Not to speak of my noble Friends who addressed you with such power to-night—the noble Duke who moved the Amendment, and the noble Lord the late Colonial Secretary—let them reflect on the splendid exhibition of debating power which was made in another place during the entire of the discussion on the Corn Bill. My Lords, it calls to my remembrance a fable which was related of old, of one who went to a magician and begged that he would discover to him a treasure in his field. The magician told him to labour at his field, to dig up the entire surface, and not to leave a single clod that was not upturned. He went his way, and complied with the direction, nor desisted in his toil till every clod was reduced to powder, and all was exposed to the genial and fructifying atmosphere, but no piece of gold was discovered, and the hapless labourer—for so he considered himself—returning to the magician, bitterly complained that he had been “deceived. “What,” said the wise man, “have you found nothing?”—“Not one farthing,” replied the husbandman, “in the whole field, although I dug up the entire surface, and left no sod unturned.” “Go,” said the magician, “sow the field that you have dug, and you will find a much greater treasure in the crop you will reap next harvest, than in any piece of gold you could possibly have found.” And so, to apply the allegory, I would say of the landed aristocracy,

“Although they have failed (and fervently do I hope that they may fail here as they have elsewhere) in obtaining the object of their great exertions—although they have not found the treasures they sought for—although they have failed in getting the measure defeated against which they are leagued, they have, notwithstanding, gained another and a greater object—they have achieved a more effectual protection for themselves, and a better security for those institutions of which they are the chosen guardians, and, I will freely admit, the best defenders; for they have made a display of ability, have shown a talent for affairs, powers of debating, and intellectual endowments of every description, such as their adversaries gave them little credit for, but which they may themselves well be proud of, and from which their country will hereafter most assuredly derive lasting benefit, and their order imperishable renown. No longer let them rely for power on their pride of heraldry, their proud castles, the immemorial splendours of their ancestry, but take that position to which they are entitled as well by merit as by birth. My Lords, I have studiously avoided all personal allusions; but I should fail of discharging a duty which I owe as a citizen of this country, and as a Member of this House—a debt of gratitude upon public grounds, but a debt of strict justice as well—did I not express my deep sense of the public virtue, no less than the great capacity and the high moral courage which my right hon. Friend at the head of the Government has exhibited in dealing with this question. He cast away all personal and private considerations of what description soever, and, studiously disregarding his own interest in every stage and step of his progress, he has given up what, to a political leader, is the most enviable of all positions—the calm, unquestioned, undivided support of Parliament; he has exposed himself to the frenzy of the most tempest-troubled sea that the political world in our days, perhaps, ever exhibited. He has given up what to an ambitious man is much—the security of his power; he has given up what to a calculating man is much—influence and authority with his party; he has given up what to an amiable man is much indeed—private friendships and party connexions; and all these sacrifices he has voluntarily, and with his eyes open, encountered, in order to discharge what, be he right, or be he wrong, he deemed a great public

duty. He, in these circumstances—he, in this proud position—may well scorn the sordid attacks, the wretched ribaldry, with which he is out of doors assailed, because he knows that he has entitled himself to the gratitude of his country, and will leave—as I in my conscience believe he will leave—his name to after ages, as one of the greatest and most disinterested Ministers that ever wielded the destinies of this country.

Debate adjourned.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Tuesday, May 26, 1846.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL—SECOND READING.—SECOND NIGHT.

THE EARL OF WILTON said, that he could assure their Lordships that it was not his intention to occupy much of their Lordships' time and attention on the present occasion; but as he believed the measure now proposed by the Government would effect a great social revolution in the country, he thought it was only right that he should come forward and state the course which he intended to pursue, and the vote which he intended to give on the present occasion. He had for many years supported those principles which had influenced the councils of Her Majesty's present advisers; and their Lordships must believe that it was with no feelings of ordinary regret that he felt bound, in the honest discharge of his public duty, to oppose the present measure. And if it was with feelings of pain and regret that he adopted that course, how much more poignant must all these feelings be, when he found himself for the first time—and he trusted most sincerely for the last time—opposed to the noble and illustrious Duke near him (the Duke of Wellington), by whose counsel and opinions he (the Earl of Wilton) was not ashamed to say he had been actuated during the whole of his political life; and whose renowned career and the history of whose great life and actions he had been enabled to view through the medium of private friendship and esteem. He would not enter into any statistical details, for he felt that it would be impossible to add in that respect anything to the ad-

mirable speech made last night by his noble relative (Lord Stanley). He intended to rely on two grounds: first, the operation of the Corn Bill of 1842; and, secondly, the grounds which had induced Her Majesty's Ministers to abandon the principles involved in that measure. He was far from entertaining any hostile feelings towards free trade, so far as it was compatible with the institutions and condition of this country. But his firm belief was, that relaxation must have a limit—and he believed that the idea of an unfettered system of free trade could only exist in the mind of the noble Earl opposite (Earl Grey); in the minds of those who, like Her Majesty's Ministers, were sanguine as to the results of the proposed measure—in the minds of dangerous enthusiasts; those who, with more deep and perilous designs, had been hallooing on Her Majesty's Ministers in their wild career. Now, he must insist that there never was a Bill which so completely fulfilled all the intentions of its originators as the Corn Bill of 1842; for, under the operation of that Bill, they had seen an equalization of prices; that both manufactures and agriculture had flourished; and that a better feeling had grown up between the antagonist parties in the country. Why, then, quarrel with it? What were the reasons which had induced Her Majesty's Government to depart from the principles of the Bill of 1842? Notwithstanding the disclaimer of his noble Friend (the Earl of Ripon) who moved the Bill, there could not be the slightest doubt that the ground for the proposed change was to be found in the destitution and scarcity which were said to exist in Ireland. They were told, if they had any doubt on this subject to wait until the month of May, and we should have demonstrative evidences of it. The month of May had now arrived, and, he asked, where were the evidences of that destitution and scarcity? and echo answered "where?" Even if the scarcity did exist of which they were told, it still would afford no great, statesmanlike ground for making a great change in the whole commercial system of the country. He must also say, that he could not bring himself to believe that prices would be lowered in the same proportion that the prices of wages would be reduced. Now, if that were the case—if the means of purchasing provisions on the part of those who would be principally affected by the measures were to be decreased—he would implore their Lordships to pause be-

fore they proceeded further with the Bill. He was unwilling to trespass on their Lordships' time on so trite a subject; but he must be allowed to refer to the manner in which the measure was carried through the other House. It was carried through the House of Commons by a compact entered into between those parties who entertained the most extreme and dangerous opinions: to these were added that portion of the Whig party who had changed their opinions from a fixed duty to no duty at all; and also that section of the Conservative party whose opinions had undergone a change still more startling. He wished to address a few words to those noble Lords who had, like himself, supported the present Government for many years, but who now, not like himself, proposed to continue that support. If they were satisfied this measure was right and just—if they considered that favourable results would follow the passing of this measure—if they considered by passing this measure they were not giving a stimulus to an agitation for lowering the position of the aristocracy, then by all means let them vote for it. But if they considered with him that he was right in the view he had taken, then let them, without fear of clamour from without, and without fear of the imputation of being actuated by selfish motives, vote against the second reading of this Bill, and make use of that legitimate power which the Constitution had invested in them, for the preservation of the monarchy and the institutions of the country. He had now made the few observations which he felt it to be his duty to address to their Lordships on this important occasion, and it now only remained for him to thank the House for the indulgence which had been shown him.

THE DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE: My Lords, I feel it due to my own character to state to your Lordships the line which I shall feel it my duty to take on this very important question. I believe that I am now the oldest Member of this House. I have been now more than five-and forty years a Peer, and from the day I first started in public life I never voted with the Opposition; for when I found that I could not conscientiously vote with the Government, I abstained from voting at all. Some years ago the late Lord Grey applied to me to attend here on an important occasion. At that moment I was so much engaged—for I believe the States in Hanover were sitting—that I could not leave that coun-

try. I wrote to Lord Grey, saying that I should be of little assistance to him as I was not a speaker; and I gave him other reasons for not attending. Lord Grey approved of the course which I then pursued. And again some years later—after I came over to this country to settle here—I mentioned to a noble Duke the course which I pursued, and I had the satisfaction of finding that it met with his sanction. I have, therefore, two high authorities for thinking I have acted rightly in what I have hitherto done. My Lords, I am now too old to change my opinions. My object in rising now, is to state that I do not intend to vote on this question. I state to your Lordships plainly and honestly, that I cannot vote with Her Majesty's Government. But, my Lords, my own character is at stake; and if I did not state fairly, and frankly, and honestly, what I feel, I should be supposed to be lukewarm on one of the most important questions that ever came before the country. No one can deplore more than I do, the discussion of this question. I went to the House of Commons, having the highest opinion of the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, and I hoped that he would convince me, when he introduced the measure, so that I should be able to accede to it and support it. Now, I must state fairly that I could not approve of the reasons which he gave. I was totally unbiassed at the time, for everybody who knows me knows that I am no politician. All that I wish to do is to act fairly and honestly for the good of the country. With regard to the question itself, I must repeat that I regret its discussion. I wish that it had never been brought forward; but I regret this less on account of the question itself, than of the consequences which it may lead to. Many measures may be good in themselves; but when one turns round and sees the consequences, he will probably regret afterwards that it was ever brought in. I have felt it my duty thus to state my feelings to your Lordships. With regard to the question itself, it has been so ably stated and argued by my noble Friend (Lord Stanley), that I can only say that it would be very wrong and absurd on my part, if I attempted to add anything to the admirable speech made by my noble Friend. I can only repeat that I cannot approve of the measure, and that I shall feel it my duty not to vote at all.

EART GRANVILLE said, that he felt how presumptuous it was in him to offer

himself to their Lordships, when there were so many noble Lords who were desirous of addressing the House. In expressing his sentiments upon the present occasion, he should studiously follow the example which had been given this night and last night of abstinence from all personal imputation. It was not for him to praise or to blame Her Majesty's Government; but he must be allowed to say, as one who for some years had been in favour of unrestricted free trade, that the sacrifices made by the Government in adopting free-trade principles gave some weight to the arguments which he and noble Lords who thought with him had been in the habit of urging. Their Lordships had been told of the weight of authority which existed in favour of a Corn Law; but in matters of commercial legislation he thought that the worst authority to which they could appeal was the wisdom of their ancestors. He considered that with the changes which were constantly occurring, the increase which had taken place in manufactures, wealth, the means of communication, and with the increase of population which was going on, it was idle, in matters of commerce and trade, to go back to the time of Edward the Fourth. He would much rather look and see who were the parties who opposed, and who supported, the present measure. Now, a great deal had been said about the unanimity of the farmers on this subject. He was not so sure that this unanimity existed, and at any rate he thought that it was rather to be looked for in the western parts of the metropolis, than in the rural districts. By some, indeed, it was asserted that converts were constantly made among the farmers to free trade. He owned, however, that he did not think that this signified much, nor did he consider that the opinion of the farmers, as a body, ought to have much weight with an enlightened assembly like that which was to be found in their Lordships' House; for although the farmers were a most useful and highly respectable body of men, yet, from their education and habits of life, it was almost impossible for them, as a body, to come to correct views on the laws which regulated the distribution of national wealth. Let their Lordships look at a higher class in society—the class of country gentlemen. The country gentlemen, as a body, were well educated, and generally well informed; but it was notorious that they not only, as a body, were not political economists, but detested the very name of political eco-

nomy: although without some knowledge of that science it was impossible to attain a proper acquaintance with the laws which regulate commercial transactions. Their opinions, therefore, on questions of this nature, were not entitled to much consideration. There was another class of persons to whose conduct he wished to direct their Lordships' attention, he meant the clergy of the Established Church. He thought that if the predictions of the opponents of the Bill were verified, and that corn bore a lower price than it had hitherto brought in the market, the clergy would suffer directly from the operation of the measure; and the compensating effects would not reach them so soon as they would other classes of the community. Feeling this to be the case, he considered that the highest credit was due to the clergy for their abstinence from public discussion on this subject. He found, however, that though this measure was said to be opposed by the farmers and the country gentlemen, it was supported by the manufacturing and the commercial classes; and he could not allow men possessing their intelligence and standing in the country to be called turbulent. These classes were in favour of free trade; and when those who had the direction of public affairs headed those classes, he felt that whether his opinions on the subject of the present measure were right or wrong, he had some authority for holding them. Much had been said about the severe blow to agriculture which would be given by this Bill; but when he saw some of the poorest land in the southern parts of the country ploughed up, he felt that some of the alarm which had been excited must be imaginary. If there were any alarm upon this subject, he believed it to be chiefly of that species of apprehension which arose from the fear that their Lordships might possibly refuse to pass this measure. If they passed it into a law, they would make no change in the Constitution, but only a great fiscal change; setting an example to other countries of the true principles on which commercial legislation should be conducted, and settling an agitation which divided two interests which ought to be inseparably united. He hoped, therefore, that their Lordships would not be actuated by any fear of a charge of inconsistency, but would suffer the Bill to become law.

THE MARQUESS OF NORMANBY said, that this Bill was not such a settlement of the question as he for one should have

preferred to have seen carried into effect. His noble Friend (Lord Stanley) had said, that he was desirous to avoid all personal observations in the remarks which he felt it his duty to make. He (the Marquess of Normanby) was equally desirous of pursuing the same line of conduct; but, agreeing as he did with most of the arguments of his noble and learned Friend (Lord Brougham) in his speech of last night, he had felt inclined to say a few words then, by way of protest, against the eloquent piece of declamation with which his noble and learned Friend concluded his speech. The object of his noble and learned Friend's peroration was, to convey to the minds of their Lordships the impression that the conduct of the Prime Minister entitled him to be considered as a great statesman, not only for the age, but for all time. He (the Marquess of Normanby) might perhaps rest the justice of that assumption upon the reception which that observation met with in their Lordships' House. Enforced as that statement was by all his noble and learned Friend's brilliant powers of declamation, it was received with one solitary cheer from the right hon. Gentleman's zealous Colleague on the Woolsack, which found a faint echo in the voice of one of his (the Marquess of Normanby's) noble Friends who sat near him. That was the reception which such a declaration met with in their Lordships' House. He was rather unwilling to enter into the question of what the motives were which had induced their Lordships to show no concurrence in that statement. The question was, how far the right hon. Gentleman, who had without doubt conducted himself through life with the most perfect honour in private transactions, had applied the same principle in his public conduct towards others. That was not a question for him to enter upon; but as there was no assembly in the world in which the conduct of the right hon. Gentleman could be more fairly weighed, he considered that the expressive silence maintained last night was a faithful commentary upon his conduct, and almost amounted to a sentence of condemnation. Was the greatest Minister of the day, he would ask, the person who, for the last thirty years, had done more to throw difficulties in the way of settling this question than any other living man? He would, however, advert now to the question before the House. His own opinions upon the subject of the Corn Law were, perhaps, rather peculiar; and he did not think that the

results, either for good or evil, which would follow the adoption of the present measure, would be so important as the conflicting parties expected. While, therefore, he had listened with great attention to the sentiments which had been that night expressed by a noble Earl, he must venture humbly to state his own opinion, that neither the institutions of the country nor the cause of religion would be endangered by the passing of this measure. He had no opinions to retract or to change upon this subject. He had always been in favour of a gradual tendency in our commercial regulations towards free trade. He had approved every relaxation of the Tariff which could tend to promote amicable relations with foreign countries, and lead to a more equal interchange of our mutual productions; and he had never held that any peculiar exemption from the application of those principles should be allowed with respect to corn. This being his opinion at present also, he owned that he felt it to be his duty, in the few words which he should have to address to their Lordships, to state how strongly he felt that the beneficial effects to be expected from the measure had been exaggerated, more particularly with reference to its operation upon the condition of the working classes; and he did so with the view either of mitigating the present excitement, if the Bill should not pass, or that tardy, but in his opinion not less certain disappointment which would result from the working of the measure. He thought that, looking to both sides of the question, the balance would be in favour of the Bill, as it would tend to diminish the misery under which a large portion of the inhabitants of this country unfortunately laboured. He did not allude to the misery which to a greater or less extent was, and ever must be, the lot of those who had to labour; but he referred to that deep degradation and misery, more apparent from its contrast with surrounding wealth and comfort, in which the poor of many districts were plunged, and which, unless they disregarded the safety and credit of the State, ought not to remain unalleviated. His attention had been most painfully directed to this subject when, for a period of two years, he administered the internal affairs of this kingdom; and the result of his experience during that time had satisfied him that any alteration of the existing Corn Laws would not, in itself, tend very materially to mitigate the sufferings of the poor. Adam Smith said, that a full reward of

labour was the best proof of the increasing prosperity of a country; that its scanty remuneration proved that a country was stationary; and that poverty of the working classes was a sure indication that a country was retrograding. Now, when these opinions were expressed, the working classes of England were in a condition which enabled them to maintain their children in comfort, and to afford them a satisfactory education; and yet, at that time, a Corn Law was in existence which, when prices were fair, amounted almost to a positive prohibition of the importation of foreign corn. He (the Marquess of Normanby) did not assert that the condition of the labouring classes depended upon the Corn Law; but, as the reward of labour was not so ample now as when Adam Smith expressed the opinions he had quoted, it was necessary to review the changes which had occurred in the intervening period. Now, whatever mighty advantages might hereafter ensue from the wonderful improvements in machinery, there could be no doubt that the progress of those improvements during the period to which he referred, had exercised a serious influence upon the labour market. He was not one of those antediluvians who wished machinery had never been invented; but he thought the Government of this country ought to have carefully watched the effects of a transition state, and that there ought to have been no premature attempt on their part to force a development of the power of machinery. One effect of a great demand for labour in particular districts of the country had been, to induce extensive immigration to them; and the natural consequence had been, that a monopoly price had been established with regard to the dwellings of the people in those districts. It was stated in Mr. Chadwick's Report upon the Sanatory Condition of the People, that while the rent of a cottage in Rutlandshire was only 50s. a year, the annual cost of a very inferior apartment in Manchester was 7l. 10s. It appeared, also, from the Report of the Sanatory Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Health of Towns, that the cost of preventible disease in Manchester was 300,000l. a year, and as the population of Manchester amounted to 300,000 souls, this was equivalent to a cost of 1l. per head, and indeed more, because whole classes of the population were exempt from that species of disease to which the Commissioners referred. Between Rutlandshire and Manchester, there was a dif-

ference, therefore, of 5l. in the rent of a dwelling, and 1l. per head at the least in the cost of disease. Now their Lordships had heard a great deal about "cheap bread;" but he would ask their Lordships to look at the expense incurred by the poorer classes for another article of first necessity—water. Mr. Hawkesley had stated that the former cost of water to a labouring man in the town of Nottingham was 3d. a week when he fetched it himself; and when it was brought to him its expense was 3½d. to 4d. a week. Under a new system, however, for the supply of the poorer classes in that town with water, they now obtained seventy-nine gallons for a farthing, while formerly they did not obtain more than three gallons for the same money. Now the tax of an 8s. duty on corn to a labouring man would be something like 1¾d. a week, that was if the labouring man paid the whole of the tax; but, as it was stated by Mr. Senior, that only one-sixth of the tax would fall on the consumer, the cost to the labouring man would be about a farthing a week. Now, what use did he make of all this? He did not say they ought not, by passing this measure, to increase the comforts of the labouring man to the extent of a farthing a week, and he thought that this would show their inclination to do more. He wished, however, to point out what had been the conduct of the Government in this respect. They had had these reports before them three or four years, and they had the opportunity of acting upon them without creating any division of parties, or incurring reproach; but they had neglected to do so. He would now turn for one moment to the statement cited by his noble Friend from Mr. Greg. Mr. Greg gave the country a very melancholy account of the prospects of the manufactures of the country, and declared that in foreign countries there was an increasing power of underselling our manufactures. He (the Marquess of Normanby) had taken great pains to inform himself on this subject in the course of the last autumn, and he found that, to a certain extent, Mr. Greg's observation was well founded; but his (the Marquess of Normanby's) foreign commercial friends gave a very different reason for the fact to that assigned by Mr. Greg. They did not say, "We find that we can undersell you;" but they said, "We find that we can sell as cheap, by taking more pains with our manufactures, and making articles which please the eye more." He

(the Marquess of Normanby) stated this in a spirit of kindness to these gentlemen. It was high time, he thought, that these gentlemen should apply some part of the ingenuity which they had devoted to teaching the agriculturists how to improve their land, towards the improvement of their own manufactures. There was another observation which it occurred to him to make. A hope had been expressed that the passing of this measure would lead to a better education of the working people of England. He (the Marquess of Normanby) was known to entertain a very strong opinion upon a question which had been lately agitated in the Legislature; and he thought the avowal of his noble Friend was most valuable, as proceeding from one who had hitherto opposed that reduction in the hours of labour which could alone afford the working classes an opportunity of intellectual and physical improvement. The factory operatives throughout the country suffered most severely from the maintenance of long hours of labour; and it was truly stated in a recent Parliamentary Return, that while the average duration of human life in this country had generally increased, in consequence of the improvements in medical science, the average duration of life in the factory districts had fearfully diminished. The deterioration of human health in those districts had been so great, that, whereas ten or fifteen years ago the average value of human life was fifty years, it was now only forty-five. He must say that he thought their Lordships had a right to complain, when they found themselves unexpectedly forced to come to a decision upon this question in a manner which they had no right to anticipate. He complained of the conduct of the Government, because they had very much aggravated the difficulty of a peaceable and quiet settlement of this question. They had roused that defensive principle against a supposed attempt to overreach and deceive, which was one of the most powerful stimulants of human action. He considered that much higher questions were at stake here than a mere commercial principle. He thought that in all constitutional Governments public character was a sort of common stock, and that where it was wantonly disregarded, every one who was interested in the prosperity of the country and the maintenance of its institutions, suffered a positive loss. They had heard much about buying in the cheapest market and selling in the

dearest; and those who inscribed that motto upon their banners might discover some merit in a cheap Minister, who watched the turns in the political market, and turned himself accordingly. He did hope, however, that there still existed among the great body of the people of this country some regard for public character and consistency; and that a promise made by a public man, or a pledge upon which he obtained power, would still be considered one which ought to be religiously and scrupulously observed. He must say, for his own part, that he would very much prefer a fixed duty to the proposition now under consideration. This was a description of Bill with which their Lordships very rarely interfered. It was contrary to the spirit of the Constitution for their Lordships to impose taxes; and the custom had been, if their Lordships considered that a measure of this kind was so objectionable that it ought not to pass into a law, to propose its rejection on the second reading. That would be an intelligible course, and it would be equivalent to a rejection of the Bill. Any noble Lord who felt inclined to vote for an alteration of the present Bill in Committee, had better vote against the second reading, because he might be assured that any Amendment in the Bill would be followed by its rejection in the other House. He had a great anxiety to maintain the legitimate influence of their Lordships' House; and he should be sorry to see them exposed to the undeserved reproach, that, in taking so unusual a course as that of interfering with a Money Bill, they were influenced by a regard for their own private interests. Did the noble Lord opposite (Lord Stanley) believe that the present Ministerial majority of ninety-eight in the other House would be diminished in the event of an appeal to the country? Those who thought so saw their way much more clearly than he did; and he did not believe the Government could be carried on in the other House except by one or other of the two great parties who were pledged to the maintenance of this Bill. He did not agree with those who spoke of this Bill as "irrevocable." If it produced all the evils that were anticipated—if it threw land out of cultivation and disturbed the labour market, their Lordships would have no difficulty whatever in retracing their steps. He believed that this measure would be for good, but it would be purchased at a suicidal price by its authors in the sacri-

fice of their public character. Their Lordships, however, could betray no constituents by voting for it, and there could be no responsibility upon them if they took the course he recommended them to take, and passed this Bill. On the whole, viewing it as a measure from which benefits might arise, and seeing great evils in that House interfering for its rejection, it was his intention to give his vote for the second reading.

The EARL OF CARDIGAN apologized to the House for occupying their attention at a time when so many noble Lords were anxious to address their Lordships. But having now had the honour to hold a seat in this and the other House of Parliament for considerably more than a quarter of a century, during the whole of which time he had given a steady and undeviating support to the Members of the present Government, and to those of their predecessors in office who held the same opinions, he felt anxious, in a few words, to explain to their Lordships and to Her Majesty's Government why he would not support the Government on the present occasion, and the grounds on which he considered it his duty to vote for the Amendment which had been moved by the noble Duke on the cross benches. If, during the long course of years which he had held a seat in the Legislature of the country, he had not always given a consistent vote, at any rate he had given a steady, consistent, and faithful support to the measures of Her Majesty's Government. Undoubtedly, in the year 1829, when the great measure of Catholic emancipation was brought forward, he had recorded an inconsistent vote; but he did so from the high opinion and the profound respect he entertained for the noble Duke who was then at the head of the Government. But how could he possibly imagine that the carrying of that measure into a law would be but the prelude to conceding every other important measure, so that the end would be that the Government would in truth have no fixed or definite political opinion of its own; but that its whole career would consist in borrowing the principles or carrying out the measures of others? With regard to the measure now under consideration, it was not for him to enter into the merits and the details of this important question in the presence of their Lordships. It would be useless for him to do so. Suffice it for him to ask the question—what had arisen, what had occurred, to justify Her Majes-

ty's Government in calling upon them to repeal the laws in respect to the importation of foreign corn? It was unfortunately true that, to a certain extent, distress did exist during the winter months in the sister kingdom; and though he believed that these statements had been much exaggerated, yet, be that as it might, Her Majesty's Government had taken a prudent course in applying temporary relief to the distress of that country. But he would ask their Lordships, was there any man living who conscientiously believed that a temporary calamity was a sufficient ground for Her Majesty's Government calling upon them to repeal the protection existing upon the agricultural interests in the United Kingdom, and to repeal the laws which had so long existed? The right hon. Baronet had encouraged by his conduct and his speeches the cry which had been raised at the last general election, when the representatives of the people offered themselves to their constituents on the cry of protection to agriculture, as opposed to the cry of cheap bread, which had been raised at least by a portion of the late Government. What was the success of that appeal to the country? Was it not most triumphant? Was there not an enormous, a preponderating majority returned to the House of Commons in favour of protection? The representatives of the people in the House of Commons had recorded their opinion in favour of protection to agriculture since the year 1841, by large majorities, no less than four or five different times. Their Lordships also had taken every opportunity to record similar votes. But they were now called upon to stultify all their former proceedings, and to reverse all their former votes. They had placed themselves under leaders, on whose talents, and judgment, and supposed rectitude, they had hitherto reposed every confidence. He did not know what might be their Lordships' opinion upon this subject; but, for himself, he must say, that when the leaders of a Government would induce and lead on a party for five, ten, twenty, or twenty-five years by every argument which the eloquence of the English language would supply, they had no right to turn round afterwards and call upon their followers to reverse their proceedings. He did not pretend to have any stronger or finer feelings than other people—nay, likely less; but he could not refrain from saying, that he thought they had been placed in an unfortunate predicament—either to disunite

themselves from their party, which, were it not for the conduct of their leaders, they should be sincerely attached to, or to reverse their former votes and decisions, and place themselves in a position which, in his humble judgment, would be derogatory to their position as legislators, or even as gentlemen. Their Lordships would shortly be called on to record their votes on this question. He would not presume to advise them; but he would ask this question—were they going to reverse their former decisions and opinions? And he would ask this further question—what would be the opinion of the respectable middle classes of this country if they did so?—what would be the opinion of the yeomanry of this country?—what would be the opinion of the farmers of this country, a respectable race, who loved honesty and plain dealing, and hated duplicity and sudden change? If their Lordships would consent to yield up this question at all, let them yield it up to the fairly demonstrated opinion of the people of this country, after that opinion had been tested by the choice of their representatives in a new election—yield up to the demand of the great body of the people; but not to a vacillating and inconsistent Minister. He must apologize to their Lordships for having detained them so long. He would conclude by saying that he had long supported the Government of Her Majesty, both in this and in the other House of Parliament; but thinking the measure proposed would bring confusion and ruin on the country, he must give it his decided opposition.

The EARL OF WINCHILSEA said, he had a strong and conscientious feeling on this important question, and felt that he would not be doing his duty as a Member of their Lordships' House if he gave a silent vote. He could with truth say that he would give all that he possessed if he could satisfy his own feelings by simply recording his vote against this measure. The consideration of the question deeply affected the happiness of the people of this country—and whether he regarded it as the downfall of a great political party, with which he had been connected upwards of thirty years, or whether he regarded it in the still greater point of view, as being the destruction of all confidence in public men—he felt that he could not give a silent vote. The maxim ought to be engraved in golden letters—for it was a divine truth—that all public respect, all confidence in public men, should arise

from the regard which they maintained for principle, for honesty, and for truth. The history of nations had shown, and, indeed, it seemed to be decreed by the Divine Governor of mankind, that when once those whom he had blessed with means, who ought to be the most educated and the most enlightened—the higher orders of the country—were found wanting in their duty, such a nation when cast in the balance would be found wanting, and the sentence, "You shall be removed from among the kingdoms of the earth," fulfilled. The question was not so much would they remove protection from agriculture, as would their Lordships countenance or allow the Government of this great country to act in so degrading a manner as to give a premium to those who brought forward one of the most revolutionary schemes that had ever been introduced. What was the case in 1829? The principles which he advocated then as well as now were supported by a large party, and were the strong bond of union between the Government and their supporters. That measure too was carried in violation of plighted pledges—of professions and of principles—in direct opposition to the pledges upon which the Members of the other House had been returned. That question—and he said it with shame and with sorrow—after being rejected by a majority of 45 in this House, was six months after carried by a majority of 105. What followed? A reform in Parliament, by which the legislative functions of that House were placed in abeyance. The noble Earl, whose character he had long admired for honesty and for consistency (the late Earl Grey), whose talents had been rarely equalled in that House, but who was, alas! no longer among them, came down and said he was empowered by the Crown to make an unlimited number of Peers unless they allowed the Reform Bill to pass. What was the consequence? They no longer dared to resist; a few, it was true, resisted to the last, but the measure was passed. But leaving that period to come to the question before them, he would ask, had not this Parliament been returned to support the principles of protection? Several divisions had been taken respecting the question of the Corn Laws, and the result had been, the maintenance of that principle. But the leader of the other House turned suddenly round, and because he got a few personal followers—some 105 out of 350, the number of

the Conservative party—he threw himself into the arms, not of that highminded and honourable and constitutional party, who lent him their support, but into the very arms of the Anti-Corn-Law League faction, embraced their views, and supported their policy—he threw himself upon another class of supporters, too, who, he had no hesitation in saying, had abandoned the principles and belied the professions upon which they were returned. He hoped their Lordships would have a due regard to the Constitution of this country, and to their own order—to their own existence and privileges—for, depend upon it, the House of Lords would be powerless indeed unless they acted in a manner to secure the affection, the esteem, the respect of the enlightened, the highminded people of this country. Their Lordships ought to take care not to tamper too lightly with the principles upon which the very Constitution of this country itself might be said to rest; and they ought not, at all events, to sanction a measure which might be attended with such disastrous results, until the people had a full and a fair opportunity of recording their free, unfettered opinions upon the change. Would they at once accede to the Anti-Corn-Law League, whose unconstitutional proceedings were manifest—a body which would level in the dust every institution that was sacred in the eyes of Englishmen? Would the House of Lords again desert their principles, as in 1832, and leave the people in the power of the Anti-Corn-Law League? He would say, that there was not a man in their Lordships' House, who was a greater friend to cheap bread than he was; but he was not for destroying British agriculture—he would have corn at the lowest price at which the English farmer could produce it, but he would not ruin him to gratify the wishes of a section of manufacturers—he would not destroy British agriculture, and thus become entirely dependent upon the foreigner—a supply which might, either from the ill-will of the Governments of those countries, or from circumstances over which they had no control, be found to be a most precarious and dangerous thing to rely on; for the two great interests of the manufacturer and the agriculturist could not be placed in the same position. The former might increase his produce as he pleased; but, for the latter, however he might expend his capital, the seed time and harvest time were not his own—after all, the return for his capi-

tal came from the Giver and the Dispenser of every blessing man enjoyed. Now, if they took the returns of the quantity of corn grown in this country, they would find that from the superabundant years there was sufficient on the average for the consumption of the people. Being his own steward over three properties in three different counties, living amongst his own tenantry, and being in constant communication with them as he had been for thirty years, he knew something of this question; and he could state it as a fact, that in the year 1835, when wheat was sold at 34s. and 35s. a quarter, the farmers gave the wheat to the pigs and to the horses to eat: hundreds of thousands of quarters had been expended in this way which had never been taken into account at all; but if there had been any providence on the part of the Government, to have treasured up that superabundant quantity—a system he had always advocated—there would have been sufficient at other times for the consumption of the people. He was no advocate for high prices for agricultural produce, nor did they much benefit the farmer; for when they occurred it was generally between the months of April and September, when the farmers had no grain on hand—when, in short, the market was supplied by speculators, who, by a fallacious system of keeping up the averages, contrived to introduce foreign corn at the lowest possible rate of duty, which they poured into the markets at the very time when the home supply would be available by the harvest. The poorer farmers were, in order to pay their rent and taxes, obliged to sell in a falling market, generally about Michaelmas. He maintained, in opposition to those free-trade theorists, that the wages of labour was, to a great extent, regulated by the price of corn. He had seen repeated instances of it. But some said that the prices of agricultural produce would not, after all, be so much lowered—that Lincoln Heath and such places, which had been reclaimed at a great expense, which was farmed still with more cost than richer soils, would not be thrown out of cultivation. Well, then, he answered such statements by replying, if the price of agricultural produce would not be much lowered, why unsettle the whole condition of the country? Why check those improvements? Why disturb men's minds? It had been admitted, that, since 1842, the farmers and landlords had spent more capital on land, than for the ten years preceding.

And why was this? Because they thought this question had been finally adjusted—completely settled in 1842. And if bread would not be much cheaper than it was at present, why should they deceive those who supported the measure on the ground solely that it would give cheap bread? There could be no doubt corn would be cheaper; and the effect would be, that not only the inferior but the richer soils would be thrown out of cultivation. The richer soils would be burdened with poor rates, which they would be unable to bear; and the British capitalist would fly to foreign countries and invest his money in land, as he had already invested them in the construction of foreign railroads. It was asked, where was the corn to come from? There need be no fear in that respect. Why, in America alone more corn might be produced than all Europe would require. In a letter he had received from a gentleman who was now living there it was stated, that the quantity raised last year in the United States was not less than 105,000,000 of quarters. The land then of this country must go out of cultivation, and what would become of those persons who were now employed upon it? But he would not trespass further on their time; and he earnestly implored their Lordships, without any consideration to private feelings or private affections, to discharge their duty conscientiously, and to reject this measure. He would say that some noble Lords were inclined in 1846 to take the same course which they took in 1829; but he implored them not to do so; for if they gave a vote contrary to their conscientious opinions, they would forfeit not only the respect and confidence of the country, but, what was of more consequence, their own. Several noble Lords had expressed to him the deep regret which they would carry to their graves that, upon a memorable occasion, they had been induced to do violence to their own feelings and support the existing Government of the day; and their Lordships might depend upon it that if they forfeited again the respect and confidence of the people of England, as they did in 1829, from that moment the independence of their Lordships' House would cease. It might exist as a House of Lords, but it would be dependent upon the House of Commons.

THE EARL OF CLARENDON: I can assure your Lordships that I shall trespass very briefly upon your time, for I have the satisfaction of not finding myself

in the category of those whom the noble Lord (Lord Stanley) has so solemnly warned against their inconsistencies, or upon whose consciences he expects their votes to weigh so heavily. I have no new opinions to avow, nor old ones to retract, having rarely missed an opportunity, since I had the honour of a seat in this House, of stating what I conscientiously thought were the mischievous effects of protection in any shape, and of expressing my hope and belief that the time was rapidly approaching when the Corn Laws must be abolished; still, however, as I trust that this is the last time your Lordships will be called upon to discuss the question, I cannot avoid expressing the unfeigned satisfaction with which I, in common with all those who desire to carry out the principles of free trade, must view a measure which will for ever, and I wish I could add at once, extinguish the whole protective system, and which is introduced with all the weight and authority that a Conservative Government can impart to it. It little matters now by what causes the Government may have been influenced, whether they be the result of observation and experience during the last three years—whether they be the sound arguments of their opponents, or the diseased potatoes of Ireland—all doubtless had their part in bringing about that decision which we learn from my noble Friend (Lord Stanley) was unanimous in December last, with the important exception of my noble Friend himself; and no one more cordially regrets than I do that his doubts upon which he took eight-and-forty hours to deliberate were not so resolved as still to give Her Majesty and the country the advantage of his services and great talents. I rejoiced, however, that such a measure as this was brought forward by the Government, and I rejoiced almost as much at the wisdom and justice of the avowals by which its introduction was accompanied, and its defence has been conducted throughout the long and weary ordeal it has had to undergo; but I have never looked upon this as a triumph to any party either in Parliament or in the country, or the question as one of party at all, but rather as one of facts and experience; for of all subjects the Corn Laws is the one with respect to which opinions during the last thirty years have unavoidably been undergoing the most frequent modification as knowledge was acquired, as science advanced, and as the numbers and wants of the community increased.

Why, the different Corn Laws themselves are a proof of this; and there is not a man in the country, who has seriously reflected upon this important subject, can affirm that during thirty years his views have remained the same; for where the elements upon which judgment is formed are themselves variable, opinions must be subject to modification; and can the protectionist party say that their minds have escaped this process, and still remain uninfluenced by circumstances? Will they when they take upon themselves the responsibilities of office, as they now do the responsibilities of opposition—an event which may speedily occur—will they insist upon maintaining the present law at all hazards, or are they not even now prepared to admit of some change in it? Would they not now gladly accept and hail as a measure of salvation, that very duty of 8s., which five years ago they scornfully rejected and denounced as a revolutionary plot to ruin them? Are we not even threatened with some such proof of their change of opinion when this Bill goes into Committee?—some Amendment which will throw overboard their whole principle, and which will demand not protection for agriculture but protection for the Exchequer? I repeat, then, this is no political question, but one of facts and experience; and I sincerely regret, therefore, the public time lost, and the public injury inflicted, in discussing not the merits of this Bill, but in demonstrating that it was a party question, though, in fact, all the virulent abuse that has been expended upon Sir Robert Peel, and all the opposition that has been raised against the Minister, even more than against the measure, merely proved that he was influenced by higher considerations than those of party; and that if he did forfeit the favourable opinion and support of his political Friends, he sacrificed them to what was of far higher importance—the public good: he can have had no other conceivable motive, except a sense of public duty, for doing what he has done. With famine advancing at rapid strides in Ireland—(*Ironical cheering*)—noble Lords may cry “hear, hear!” but they must give me leave to tell them that if they had been sitting on the Ministerial benches last October and had received from the Lord Lieutenant and other official quarters the reports that reached the Government, they would not have dared to disregard them; nor would they, any more than Sir Robert Peel, have refrained from taking measures

for relieving the Irish people. It was his bounden duty to protect, as far as human means could do so, that country from starvation and its attendant evils—disease and turbulence; and he might in November last have opened the ports by Order in Council—for my own part I heartily wish he had—indeed, during the progress of the debate he was told by one of the protectionist leaders that he would have been fully justified in so doing; and he was formally invited to open the Irish ports by others, who thereby admitted that the existing law is inadequate for any sudden emergency, and inefficient when tested by the pressure of circumstances. Now, this is another proof of change of opinion, for if this party had stedfastly adhered to their doctrine, that the law always secures an abundant supply at reasonable prices, they should have insisted upon more stringent protection for the relief of Ireland, instead of demanding the temporary admission of corn free of all duty. I shall not waste a moment in observing upon the absurdity and the impossibility of opening the Irish ports, when there was a duty of 17s. upon corn in the English ports and the trade perfectly free between the two countries; but if the ports of the United Kingdom had been opened in November last, is there any human being who thinks that after a suspension of the Corn Laws for six or eight months, it would have been politic or practicable to restore them? My noble Friend complained that Sir Robert Peel would give him no guarantee that they should be reimposed—he would have had much greater cause for complaint if he (Sir Robert Peel) had given a pledge which he knew he could not have redeemed. There is no power in the country that upon questions of food—questions that may really be called vital ones—can dare to disregard public opinion, or to precipitate the conflict that may any day occur: and this Bill is, in my humble judgment, the only means now open to us of averting such a struggle between different classes—the only kind of civil war that our manners and state of civilization now admit of, but not the less formidable for that—with all the rancour and animosity it would leave behind, and all the consequences it would entail upon those who eventually would have to yield, and who would repent when too late of not having been wise in time. The noble Duke on the cross benches declares that he and his party have been completely taken by surprise by this mea-

sure ; but if they have chosen to be deaf and blind to the intentions of Sir Robert Peel, the country has not been so—the country has well understood what he was about, and in which direction he was steering for the last four years. Previously to that time, however, is a very different question, and for my own part I have never been able to explain how statesmen of acknowledged experience and foresight—statesmen who must, or who ought to have understood the wants and the wishes of the country, and the manner in which alone they could safely be dealt with—political leaders whose speedy advent to power and the responsibility of Government was secure—how they could have joined in maligning the motives and misrepresenting the measures of the late Government, in advocating the fallacies which they knew it would soon be their duty to combat, and in decrying the policy of free trade, which they must have foreseen they should shortly have to promote, has, I repeat, always appeared inexplicable to my mind upon any hypothesis of common sense or common honesty. Be that as it may, however, it is fortunate for the country that circumstances since that time have been precisely reversed, and that upon all questions affecting our great commercial interests we have had a Government possessing the power to do good, and an opposition without the will to thwart them. During these four last years Sir Robert Peel has never ceased to speak in language intelligible to those who did not wilfully deceive themselves. Such persons alone can have believed that the broad principles of commercial policy laid down by him on every occasion were inapplicable to the Corn Laws, and that when he threw wide open the gates of free trade he did so only for the admission of colonial asses, and drugs, and furniture woods, and a few hats and boots, and resolutely intended to close them against the most important of all commodities—the food of our rapidly increasing and always under-fed population. But notwithstanding the abundant notice of his intentions given by Sir Robert Peel—a notice, moreover, which has been well understood even by those who pretend ignorance, for suspicion and denunciation of him for his speeches, his Tariff, his Canadian Corn, and his political economy have really formed the staple topics at agricultural meetings for the last three years. Notwithstanding the important statements of Sir James Graham, whose

official position united with the most extraordinary industry make him more than any other man master of the statistics of this country—notwithstanding that he proved year after year, by incontrovertible facts, that cheapness and plenty were the real foundation of our prosperity, that coincident with them were to be found greater contentment, diminution of crime, abatement of commotions, improved health, and increased commerce, and that high prices of the necessities of life were always disastrous to the country; that the poor were tempted to crime, and that the rates of mortality increased—notwithstanding all this the agriculturists have affected to stand aghast with surprise, and have loudly raised the cry of protection to native industry; not, as formerly, protection to agriculture; that would be rather too stale and too exclusive for the present times and the present state of the public mind. And there again is another proof of change of opinion: a more comprehensive cry was required, and protection to native industry, protection to all the industrial classes of the country, has been substituted; but native industry in this general sense does not want you, it repudiates alike your new-born sympathy and your worn-out legislation. The great staple manufacturers of the country—men, some of whom give employment to from 1,000 to 2,000 workmen, and pay from 1,000*l.* to 2,000*l.* a week in wages—men who, give me leave to say, are as much or even more immediately interested than your Lordships in the tranquillity of the country and the prosperity of all classes in it; they want no protection, neither do the manufacturers of cloth and linen, although with glove-makers, and bootmakers, and hatters, and glass manufacturers, they have each in their turn thought that the withdrawal of protection would be their ruin, but now find how infinitely more they prosper without it; and they, moreover, have had the manliness and the honesty to avow it; in fact, there is not one single instance in the commercial history of this country where consumer or producer has been injured by a relaxation of the prohibitory system. Well, then, as native industry stands in no need of protection, the patriotism and indignation which have been raised in its behalf must return to the source from which they sprung, to agriculture; and I quite agree with the noble Duke on the cross benches, that the interests rightly understood of all persons engaged in that important branch of industry are identical.

I quite agree in the affectionate assurances given to tenant farmers and day labourers at those convivial meetings which have multiplied so prodigiously since the repeal of the Corn Laws was seriously agitated, that the landlords, and tenant farmers, and labourers, were all in one boat; that they must pull together, and swim together, or sink together; that there could be no separation of interests; I quite admit it: but if these interests are embodied in, or identified with, a system of protection, I utterly deny it. I defy any one to show that the labourers have gained by that system, or are in any way interested in its maintenance. The noble Duke has drawn a lively picture of the thatch under which they live, and the good air in which they work; but not a word has he said of their wages, of the 6s. or 7s. a week upon which a man and his family are said to support themselves in some counties; consider that, my Lords, consider the quantity and the quality of food by which with them life is sustained; consider their moral and physical condition, their hopeless life of toil, their impossibility of saving—hardly of existing; consider the evidence of the numerous medical men from all parts of the country examined two years ago before the Committee on medical relief administered to the poor; their answers without exception were, that large portions of the labouring classes were miserably under-fed, and that that was the reason why so many of them could not perform a proper day's work, nor recover from sickness when they fell ill. I will defy any one, then, to show that the labourer can sink lower in the social scale than he now is under the protective system; and he has, therefore, no interest in upholding it. Next come the tenant farmers—and I will admit that some of them who have neither capital, nor education, nor experience, men who take 200 or 300 acres of land as they would a public house, but who have no more business to be farmers than they have to be jewellers—I admit that such men may require artificial means to save them from the consequences of their own incapacity; and that they, perhaps, will be unable to bear up against competition. I am aware that in saying this I expose myself to being classed with those whom my noble Friend accuses of cruelty and heartlessness; but his arguments, if carried to their legitimate extent and practically acted upon, would check every attempt at progress, and always

make improvement wait upon ignorance: they are just as valid against home competition as against foreign; they would have been quite as applicable in favour of spade husbandry against the plough, or against the spinning-jenny in favour of the distaff. But to the good farmer, to the man who has the necessary capital, and education, and intelligence, who does not obstinately adhere to the system and the implements of his forefathers, who receives every new improvement as a boon, who watches the discoveries of science and their practical application in order to turn them to his own use, and has confidence that he is secure of reaping the profits of his own investment and skill, to such men competition will, in agriculture as in every other business of life, prove but a healthy stimulus. Supposing, however, that the worst fears of the worst alarmists were at first to be verified—that we were inundated, as it is called, with all this foreign corn which is to pour in upon us, Heaven only knows whence or how, though to judge from the language of some we might expect it to roll in upon the waves of the ocean, and be delivered gratis at every man's door; for it now would seem sufficient to read or hear of any great plain in the heart of Russia, or of the United States, in order at once to jump to the conclusion that twenty or thirty bushels an acre of the finest wheat will be immediately grown there, and sent here at 25s. or 30s. a quarter, without the smallest reference being necessary to want of capital and skill, to inveterate habits of bad husbandry, to cost of transport or vicinity to places of shipment; when really one should think that with Ireland close to our doors, governed by our laws, exposed to our example, far less taxed than ourselves, commanding, as she ought to do, our capital, and possessing every advantage for becoming the granary of this country and rendering us independent of foreign supplies, but where much of the land is absolutely lying in waste, where all of it is but half cultivated, and from whence, with the exception of last year, we have annually derived a less and less supply of wheat;—with such a picture as my noble Friend has drawn of agriculture in Ireland, and with such a practical example under our eyes of the difficulty of changing the habits of a nation under all the circumstances most favourable instead of most adverse to such a change, one should really think that we might spare ourselves this bugbear

of inundation. But supposing it to occur, and that all at once millions of human beings were to be cursed with an abundant supply of human food, well, all that in this impossible supposition could happen to the tenant farmer would be that he could not pay the same rent, that he must have some reduction until the exportation of grain from abroad had raised its price to the level of that produced at home, or until he found the means of successfully meeting this foreign competition; and that, in fact, is what it is all reducible to, to an hypothetical, and, as I am convinced, groundless apprehension of reduced rents; but in saying this I neither mean to impute selfish motives to any one, nor to doubt the conscientious convictions of those who think that any material reduction in the value of land would be hurtful to all classes of our countrymen; but, on the other hand, I have my own convictions, founded upon no brief or careless consideration of the whole subject, that this is solely a landlords' question, and that it is to their alarms we owe all this fierce opposition to the measure, all these charges of treachery and these lamentations over native industry, not a syllable of which, be it remembered, was heard here when the duties on silks, on cloth, on linens, on gloves, or hats, or boots, or furniture, were reduced—when the exportation of machinery was permitted, or any of those various changes affecting productive industry, and involving foreign competition, which for the last twenty years it has been the policy of this country to adopt. The British lion was not roused, and the British sun did not set for ever upon any of these occasions; it is only when corn, or cattle, or wool, or hops, or apples, are meddled with, that we hear of treachery and dishonour, and men deserting their colours, and who, if they had been in India lately, would all have run away; and it is only when the things we grow, not the things we make, are touched, that we arrive at the true Parliamentary definition of native industry. But, I say, that all this arises from a hypothetical and groundless fear, because we know that in consequence of the improvements in the science and practice of agriculture, and the stimulus given to production during the last thirty years, the price of corn has fallen 50 per cent., while the rental of the country has increased 16 or 17 per cent.; and that the price of wheat cannot, therefore, be taken as any test of the prosperity of the land, or the rent of

the landowner; and that it would be just as true to affirm that because a piece of cotton, which at the close of the war was worth 25s. now sells for 5s., the manufacturers of cotton have suffered, whereas the reverse is notoriously the fact. These fears are groundless, however, although some of your Lordships will doubtless at first be considerable losers; my noble Friend, for instance, who I am sure conscientiously believes everything he asserts, and who I am equally sure will endeavour to mitigate the ruin he has so confidently predicted to his tenants, by lowering his rents some 50 or 60 per cent. directly that this Bill becomes law; yet I am convinced it will be a gratuitous, though I admit a necessary, sacrifice on his part, and that competition for his farms will soon force him into the enviable position of recognising his error, and increasing his income. I say again the alarm is groundless, because it gives no sign of existence; no stimulus has been unapplied, no effort has been wanting to raise a panic, whether emanating from Parliamentary speeches, or protectionist landlords, or newspapers, or from agricultural societies, or from that great central focus of alarm—No. 17, New Bond Street; but they have all fallen still-born, for I cannot look upon that provincial assembly which was summoned to meet last week at Willis's Rooms as any proof of panic, when I bear in mind that during the four months that the measure of the Government has been before the country, farmers have made no preparation for the oncoming calamity by turning off their labourers, or lowering their wages. Tenants, in spite of all warnings, will hold on their farms or renew their leases at the same or sometimes at higher rents since the full extent of their approaching misfortunes was explained to them; and land, notwithstanding so much of it is about to be thrown out of cultivation as to become barren waste, will unaccountably sell at its accustomed price. I again repeat that these apprehensions are groundless, because the greatest alarmist is not prepared to act upon his assertions, or to prove his own belief in them by selling his estate at a depreciated value; and of this I am sure, that if any one of your Lordships will this evening publicly announce that he is prepared to accept four or two years' purchase for his estate less than its marketable value eight months ago, his difficulty will be, not in finding a purchaser, but in deciding among the host of competitors for

his property, by whom within the next few days he will be assailed. One of two things must be admitted, either these fears are groundless, or they have a reasonable foundation. If the former—if there be no real cause for alarm—if the free admission of corn into England be not likely to produce effects materially different from those which for a series of years have been observed in the Channel Islands, where the corn trade being perfectly free and the people able to take the most favourable moments for importing it, and in quantities not capable of influencing the German markets, the average price of wheat from 1820 to 1840 inclusive has been 51s. 9d. in Guernsey, and in Jersey from 40s. to 50s. per quarter. If it be not really believed that we are so destitute of capital, and skill, and enterprise, that in everything we must be beaten by everybody—if it can be doubted that the agriculturists of England have more capital and greater skill than any others, a more fertile soil and as good a climate. [Lord STANHOPE: No!] The noble Lord says "No;" but I should like him to tell me what country possesses so many agricultural advantages. Can he compare those of Germany to ours? can he deny that our land produces more than any other, that our farmers have better breeds of cattle, better roads, better markets, and cheaper labour for the work done? and of this last point there can be no doubt; for although the numerous English labourers who have for some time past been employed abroad in the hard work of constructing railways receive twice as much wages as the foreign labourers, yet the capitalists who employ them consider this abundantly compensated by the more than double labour they perform. Well, then, if all this be true, neither rents, nor agricultural profits, nor the value of land will suffer; and the opposition that has been raised against a measure by which a more regular supply of food will be secured to the people is both unjust and mischievous; or on the other hand, the apprehensions are well founded and the price of corn will greatly fall—to what price however it is not easy to say; where the calculations of loss are so vague and are so little founded upon facts or experience, it is difficult to fix upon any particular point in the descending scale of prices upon which alarmists would agree; but perhaps 10s. a quarter would not be an exaggerated interpretation of that total ruin which by some is so confidently predicted; and I observed

that that amount of loss was the basis of my noble Friend's calculations—in other words, that our wheat must fall 10s. in order to be on a level with the foreign wheat that enters into competition with it. Well, but what is that but saying that corn can be bought elsewhere cheaper by 10s. a quarter than our own, and that of that advantage the community is deprived by the existing law? and taking the consumption at 20,000,000 of quarters annually, the agriculturists would thereby impose a tax of 10,000,000*l.* sterling upon the people—double the amount of the income tax—not one farthing of which goes into the Exchequer, or alleviates other burdens, and not one farthing of which goes into the pockets of the landlords; if it did, there would be some reason in the system, and no small patriotism and self-sacrifice in the abandonment of it; but this enormous tax would simply be paid for the increased cost of production, and be as absolutely wasted as if it were thrown into the sea. I cannot conceive that there should be a question about the uncompensated injury that this would produce, and I will endeavour in a few words to illustrate what I have now been saying. I will suppose that two vessels are lying side by side in the port of London. The one from Dantzic with corn on board at 30s. a quarter, the other from Hull with wheat of the same quality at 40s. There can be little doubt to which of these ships the labouring man, or indeed the wealthy man, would go for his supply. He goes to the Dantzic vessel, but finds it guarded by tidewaiters who order him to pass on to the other, where he pays 2*l.* for the eight bushels of corn, which from the first vessel he might have obtained for 30s.; and not all the ingenuity of my noble Friend will render that man grateful for the protection thus vouchsafed to him, nor make him believe that it secures to him and to his family as much as they want to eat at the most reasonable price; and do you suppose that the manufacturer will thank you for your protection to native industry, which makes the labourer pay 25 per cent. dearer for the food that he must have, instead of buying with it the clothing and the comforts that he must then manage to do without? Will not the manufacturer consider that the Legislature has thus deprived him of a customer; and will not these two men agree that as both are injured by the law, and that as people could not be so foolish as to make laws which

did good to no one, that all the advantage must be for the producer of the corn, and that into his pocket had gone this additional 10s., this 25 per cent. of the poor man's wages, which to him would have given comforts, and to the manufacturer custom? Yet this supposition would be entirely erroneous, the producer of the corn would not have touched a farthing of it, he gains no more than the producer of any other commodity, for the rent of land assuredly never exceeds the profits derivable from any other business; and yet agriculture has had far greater advantages, or what were supposed to be such, than any other productive industry, but always with worse results. The system has been created by the landlords: the laws have been passed by themselves, for themselves, just when, and how they pleased; and yet no branch of business has, all things considered, made less progress; none has been so often in distress, none has so often, or more piteously solicited and obtained legislative relief; and yet it is proposed to reject the measure now before you, and to persevere in a system which not only the principal leaders of party, but the principal possessors of land in this country look upon as obsolete, unnecessary, and hurtful. A system which the most ardent or the most reckless protectionist would not venture to guarantee for three years, which he knows the first deficient harvest must sweep away when further resistance would become too dangerous, but when concession extorted by compulsion would lose all its grace and the best portion of its usefulness. It is for such a system as this, that the landed aristocracy of England would peril the proud position they now hold; a position which no other class in any country of the world can boast of, and in lieu of that homage, which is really the fittest word for the feelings with which their wealth, and rank, and social position, and as a body their general usefulness are regarded, they would expose themselves to a continued social conflict, and to that tremendous power of association which the money, the intelligence, and the active enmity of the industrious and middle classes would infallibly bring to bear against them. Before I sit down, I desire, with your Lordships' permission to say a few words upon what is novel and much maligned, but to my mind, an important and beneficial feature in the system of commercial policy which we are about to adopt, viz., that of meeting, and I will confidently add, of de-

feating, hostile tariffs by a friendly one—that of admitting freely the productions of countries which exclude our own. I have on former occasions expressed my earnest hope that diplomacy would no longer be resorted to for the purpose of liberalizing the commercial systems of other countries; and I have expressed my belief, founded upon some little knowledge and experience, that all future attempts to effect this by negotiation or treaty, would, as they have hitherto done, end in failure; for all such negotiations imply reciprocity and an interchange of equivalents, which it is found impossible to adjust with satisfaction to the various interests on both sides concerned; and the consequence almost invariably is that if a treaty be concluded one of the contracting parties considers itself overreached, and is anxious to evade the stipulations or abridge the term of its engagement, as in the case of the Brazils for instance; or else the negotiations after being long protracted are finally broken off, as in the cases of France, Spain, Portugal, and other countries within the last twenty years, leaving the non-contracting parties less amicably disposed towards each other than when they commenced, and more firmly convinced of the impossibility of reconciling their reciprocal, or as they suppose adverse interests, and thus they continue to wage that war of custom-houses, which is hurtful alike to the producers and consumers of every country. The only wise and practical course is for each nation to pursue that which it believes to be best for itself, and to disregard the policy adopted by others; and surely, the fact of our being a heavily taxed people is no reason why we should pay dearer than is necessary for the commodities we want, and which are produced abroad. The income tax, and the assessed taxes, and the poor rates, are all so many reasons for not superadding to them the Custom-house tax, except for purposes of revenue. The illiberality of other countries is no reason why we should not buy in the cheapest market, although we may not at first be able to sell in the dearest; it is no reason for our inflicting upon ourselves a double penalty. We have but to look to our own interests, and at the same time that we advance them, we shall give an example which the rest of the world must follow; for as other countries unfortunately will not make us a present of their commodities which we want, they must take in exchange the commodities

we have to give; but then we are usually told that this may be very true, that they will send us their productions, but they will take nothing but bullion in return. I shall, however, not waste the time of this House in demonstrating that there is no distinction between the precious metals and any other commodity, and that to obtain gold and silver, we must have exported to the Brazils or to Mexico some productions of our own of which those countries stood in need; but I totally deny that any such result would permanently ensue. It may arise under extraordinary circumstances, as in 1839 and 1840, when, owing to our deficient harvests and our sliding scale, we had to import nearly 3,000,000 quarters of corn at a cost of about 7,000,000*l.* sterling suddenly, when no preparation could be made for payment by the ordinary means of trade, and when, consequently, this corn had to be paid for in bullion, the only medium available for the emergency. At that time the bullion in the bank of England sunk from 9,300,000*l.* in the month of January 1839, to 2,500,000*l.* in the month of October—7,000,000*l.* sterling were withdrawn in the space of nine months; and by the assistance of the bank of France alone, we were preserved from the misfortune and the disgrace of a national bankruptcy. But what has been the consequence since? Why, upon its being ascertained that we should annually require from the Continent about 1,500,000 quarters of corn, due preparations in the ordinary channels of commerce have been made for meeting this importation; and I beg the special attention of your Lordships to the fact, that from the time of the establishment of the Zollverein in 1833, our exportations to Germany after a partial decline remained stationary at rather more than 4,500,000*l.* annually down to the years 1838 and 1839, during which period, little or no corn was imported into this country; but that since those years our importation of corn having been considerable and regular, our exports to Germany have risen from 4,800,000*l.* in 1837 to 6,700,000*l.* in 1844, and no derangement in our monetary system has taken place. As a further illustration, I will advert to the case of France, where shortly after the Revolution of 1830, a Mixed Commission, of which I had the honour of being a Member, was appointed to sit at Paris with the object of placing the commercial relations of the two countries upon a more satisfactory footing; and although the able and en-

lightened men named by the French Government, one of whom was M. Duchatel, the present Minister of the Interior, were quite as desirous as their English colleagues to conclude a treaty, it was found impossible to reconcile adverse interests or to effect an exchange of equivalents, and the negotiations were suspended. At that time the value of our exports to France did not reach 500,000*l.*—an amount really disgraceful, when we consider the contiguity of the two countries and the reciprocal need of each other in which they stand—since then the French tariff has continued in unabated hostility; but it has been our policy to reduce the duties upon a great variety of French commodities, and what has been the result? Why, that the value of our exports to France has increased from 476,000*l.* in 1833, to 2,600,000*l.* in 1845. This export trade, moreover, is not confined to one or two articles, but includes all the different manufactured productions of this country. Facts such as these cannot fail to have their due weight with your Lordships; but I will further illustrate the subject by referring to Spain and Portugal, where the tariffs are absolutely prohibitory, and what do we see there? Why, that British goods, cheap and abundant, are to be found in every part of the Peninsula; for it must be remembered that it is one thing to enact a prohibitive system, and another and a very different one to enforce it; so true is it that the interests of men are always more powerful than the laws made to restrain them. The smuggler is always at hand to correct the errors of the legislator; and he will always provide that the exchange of commodities, or in other words trade, shall flow in a natural, though it may be in an unlawful channel. I do not defend the system, I am only dealing with facts; and I say that the contraband trade invariably exists where prohibitory duties prevail, not only in Spain and Portugal, but in Italy, from Belgium and Switzerland into France, along the whole extent of the Russian frontier; the Zollverein cannot guard against it, it is found in activity upon the boundary line of Canada and the United States, and throughout the continent of South America. Napoleon with all his power, and all the means at his command, could not prevent it—his attempts to do so were one of the main causes of his downfall. We ourselves, in our circumscribed limits, with our well-organized coast guard and revenue forces, we could not under the prohibitory system prevent the unlimited introduction

of silk goods, we cannot now prevent a greater quantity of tobacco being smuggled into the country than passes through the Custom-house, and no human power can prevent it but by rendering the smuggler's trade an unprofitable one. We need not then have any the slightest apprehension as to the mode in which the productions of other countries will be paid for by us; and we may safely rely that if trade exists at all it will be beneficial to all those engaged in it. I know that the recent speeches of M. Guizot and M. Cunin-Grédaine have been triumphantly referred to as proofs that we have nothing to expect from France in return for our liberality; but I view these speeches in no such light. I think they were most proper and prudent speeches, particularly on the eve of a general election. I am sure we heard much worse here before our own last general election; but no Minister of a representative Government can ever be expected to originate measures which disturb powerful and protected interests until he is supported by public opinion, until the question in fact, as with ourselves, has been settled out of doors, and is ripe for legislation; and it is only when the French people become convinced, without any reference to foreign countries, that it is not for their interest to pay an enormous price for bad iron, and to submit in every branch of industry to use inferior implements, which increase the cost of production; it is only when they become convinced it is not for their interest to pay extravagantly for the wood, which for the sole benefit of the owners of forests they are compelled to consume, when from Belgium or England they might obtain a cheap and abundant supply of coal; it is only when they become fully alive to these and other uncompensated tributes which they pay for their protective system, that they will know how to deal with it as they have before done with other obnoxious privileges. Public opinion, however, in France, is daily more and more directed to these subjects; and I can assure my noble Friends on the cross benches that a free-trade league with a Duke at the head of it, is now established at Paris. The Neapolitan Government has already made great reductions in the duties on cottons, woollen goods, and salt fish. The example has been followed in the Papal States. The Sardinian Government is liberalizing its commercial system. Prussia, within the last year, has made a decided stand against any further extension

of the prohibitory system of the Zollverein. In Norway, the duties upon woven goods have been lowered in consequence of our reduction of the timber duties; and as to the United States, if my noble Friend had read the whole of the paper from which he quoted, your Lordships would have discovered what my noble Friend certainly did not lead you to expect, viz., that in that most able document, the Government of the United States submits to Congress the expediency of entirely abandoning the system of protection, and of levying no duties but for purposes of revenue. I will not, however, weary your Lordships by any further attempts to show, that although we may for some time to come expect in other countries a continuance of those errors which in our own are gradually yielding to knowledge and experience, yet that the universal tendency must be towards a freer interchange of the respective productions of different countries, and towards a recognition of the principle that low duties are always most profitable to the revenue. In fact, the whole system by which human intercourse has hitherto been so mischievously obstructed is fast crumbling away, and is about to find its level among a host of other exploded fallacies and antiquated superstitions. As for ourselves, impelled as we are by the necessity of penetrating into new markets, and of providing an increased demand for our increasing powers of production, we are about to adopt a policy which other countries will and must follow, not as a concession to us but for their own interests; a policy by which we shall extend the intercourse of nations, and carry into execution that law of God by which men are destined to be of mutual assistance to each other, but by which above all we shall give and we shall receive guarantees for placing upon a solid foundation that greatest and most inestimable blessing—peace. It is for these reasons, I think, that Her Majesty's Government act most wisely in proposing to regulate our foreign commerce without reference to the policy of other countries; and with respect to our domestic concerns, as I am convinced that no time more favourable than the present—a period of comparative prosperity—can present itself for effecting a change of system with less disturbance and dislocation of existing interests, I earnestly hope that this House may in its wisdom see fit to assent to a measure which will remove the chief source of discord from among us, and which in my con-

science I believe will be advantageous to all classes of the community, because it is founded on a wise and discriminating regard for the varying circumstances and complicated interests of this great country.

The EARL OF CARNARVON said, that he could not but regret to see Her Majesty's Ministers introduce such a measure as that before them; for he thought there had never been a time in the history of the country when such a measure had been less required; and he was persuaded that, instead of promoting that peace and harmony which the noble Lord who had just sat down contemplated it would, it was, on the contrary, calculated to inflict great and extensive injury on the interests of the country—his opinion being, that, whatever might be said as to the soundness of free trade in the abstract, it was by no means applicable to the varied and complicated interests of England. It had been observed, that our exports with France had very considerably increased of late, which increase was attributed to commercial relaxations there; but might it not be rather attributed to the untiring and unceasing energy of two great countries, each rapidly advancing in every department of industry, and going on from greatness to greatness, and neither of which had yet, he firmly believed, reached its highest point of prosperity. With greater reason, then, he would say, that under the auspices of protection, England had attained to that immense height of prosperity which it enjoyed over every other nation—and altogether deny that the increase of the exports to France originated in any commercial principle which might have been adopted by France. Reference had been made to the traffic which was carried on by smugglers. It could not be questioned but there were many articles of commerce in which smugglers could traffic with impunity; but permit him to say, that for the smuggler to carry on an illicit traffic in corn was totally out of the question. He thought there was a peculiar inapplicability in the noble Lord referring to a traffic in corn by smugglers. Allusion had been made by his noble Friend to the improved feeling which it was thought had been growing up among foreign States—that there was what was called a more liberal commercial policy prevailing now than heretofore; but he (the Earl of Carnarvon) had neither heard nor read of the springing up of that so-called liberal commercial policy; and even among those statesmen who bore a liberal reputation, such as M.

Guizot or M. Thiers, he was not aware that there were any indications among them of an approximation to the principles of free trade. Perhaps some of the very minor States might have adopted the policy to which the noble Lord (the Earl of Clarendon) adverted; but as to Naples, Sardinia, and Prussia, he did not make out his case, particularly as to Prussia, which, instead of relaxing, rather was looking out for further protection. While he (the Earl of Carnarvon) was never an advocate for high prohibitory duties, and while he thought there was a great error committed in 1815 in carrying prohibition to such a height, yet he could not forget that in a country where the state of things was so complex, principles, which might be sound enough in the abstract, could not be applied with due consideration for peculiar circumstances and individual interests. Being impressed with that view, he would advise their Lordships to be cautious and circumspect in legislating upon subjects which, if prematurely adopted, might cause such a reaction as to do more harm than good. In the course of the present debate they had heard the subject of famine brought forward. He thought that the famine question had been altogether abandoned. Of famine there was a great deal in speeches, but not much in the markets. They were told that the famine was to come in May, and then it was put off till the autumn, and now he thought he might venture to say that it had been adjourned *sine die*. The noble Lord who had last night introduced the Bill, had created in his mind no little astonishment by leaving them to suppose he had been a free trader all his life. With every respect for his noble Friend, he had never considered him in that light; but judging from the language he had heard from him, had always looked upon him as a true and faithful friend to the cause of protection. His noble Friend had argued that if the ports had been once opened, they never again could have been shut. He remembered that the ports were opened in 1826, and he had never heard that any difficulty whatever was found in closing them when the necessity for which they were opened had gone by; and, judging by the quiescent state of the manufacturing towns, he had no doubt but that when the apprehension of a famine in Ireland had been dissipated, the law would easily have been restored. In 1841, when his noble Friends opposite proposed the substitution of a fixed duty in place of

the sliding scale, they were compelled to admit that in periods of unusual scarcity or famine they would be obliged to remit that duty. Surely, they meant honestly by the farmer; they did not mean to give to the agricultural interest a mere shadow of protection, and deny them the substance; they never said they would not reimpose the duty whenever the scarcity or famine had departed. Why could not his noble Friends who now formed Her Majesty's Government have acted in the same way? His noble Friend who last addressed their Lordships said, that, with the existence of a famine in Ireland, it would have been impossible for any one to come down to that House and propose to re-enact the existing duties. That was a most dangerous argument to be used in that House. What, that a Minister could not come down to Parliament, and ask for measures of relief for his starving countrymen, without, at the same time, making a proposition for a permanent change in the Corn Laws? He should like to see the man who would have ventured to have stood up and resisted the proposition of the Minister of the Crown, because such a condition was not attached to the measure for relieving the distress of a large portion of his fellow countrymen. If such a man there was, he could not be branded with sufficient scorn; and if the Parliament had refused to grant the relief, or if they had even faltered over such a proposition, there was not a manly heart in England that would not have sympathized with the popular cry for the Repeal of the Union. His noble Friend said that the manufacturers repudiated the support of the agricultural party—that they refused protection. One of them themselves, Mr. Greg, admitted that the hosiery of Saxony was preferred in our own markets, because of its cheapness, over that of our midland counties, even although the latter enjoyed a protection of 20 per cent. That statement was borne out by a petition signed by 25,000 persons engaged in that trade, presented to that House in 1843, imploring the Legislature to prohibit the importation of foreign hosiery into this kingdom at so low a duty. Then with regard to the manufactures carried on in Sheffield: it was well known that knives and scissors, which were pretended to have been made there, were introduced from Belgium, and sold at a price which would ruin the English producer. He was strongly inclined to believe and willing to admit that the manufacturers would thrive after the passing of that

measure; but he was also convinced that it would be only for a time, because they would lose their best customers when they lost the home market. Noble Lords who supported the present policy of Her Majesty's Government seemed to consider the home trade as being insignificant when compared with the foreign trade; but that was not the opinion of Adam Smith; and even in America, at the present day, there existed a strong feeling amongst the parties engaged in agriculture against the admission of cheap foreign manufactured goods into their country. Noble Lords must know that in even the smallest villages there was to be found a shop filled with the goods of Manchester; they also knew how those villages were studded over the country. The quantity of goods which they sold must, in the aggregate, be very great; and proved the value of the home market, which, most undoubtedly, would be placed in much danger by the measure under their Lordships' consideration. His noble Friend had also alluded to the state of the labour market. Undoubtedly the lot of the labouring man was a chequered one, and would to God that legislation could improve it! but he was much afraid that the measure now proposed by Her Majesty's Government would reduce the condition of the labourer to the level of the cultivator of the soil in foreign countries. If wages could be maintained under the altered law, no question then the measure would be a boon to the labourer; but the rate of wages must be regulated by the demand and the supply in the labour market; and although the examples of Poland and of America proved that there was no inseparable connexion between the price of food and the price of labour, still he feared that in England, where the labour market was already overstocked—where the population was increasing at the rate of 1,000 a day, if much land were thrown out of cultivation, the labour market would become more overstocked, and then he feared the wages must, and would, be regulated by the price of provisions, and be reduced to the lowest level at which human existence could be maintained. It might be said that he was wrong in supposing that land would be thrown out of cultivation. His noble Friend had alluded, too slightly he thought, to the case of the small farmers—men who, he said, ought not to be farmers at all—who had no business to be farmers. They were a large body of men. The measure be-

fore the House would consign to hopeless ruin a large proportion of the tenantry of England. Their Lordships with their thousands would feel the blow perhaps but slightly, and without the loss of one substantial comfort; but the same blow would strike that unfortunate class to the ground. The wealthy farmer might ride the gale out in safety; but it would wholly swamp him who was obliged to sell his produce the moment he obtained it. It had been said that the Currency Bill of 1819 had been as disastrous as a field of battle, and had caused as much desolation as had ever been caused by the worst horrors of war. In his opinion the desolation and the amount of suffering which would be caused by the measure under their Lordships' consideration would be infinitely greater amongst the men of small capital than had been that caused by the Bill of 1819. Unquestionably, it was most desirable that a better mode of cultivation should be introduced wherever practicable: but in order that that should be so, capital was wanted; and his noble Friends were not going the right way to increase the capital of the farmer. Under favourable circumstances, the cultivator, by a free outlay of capital and skill, might grow four or even five quarters of wheat where he now grew only three; but if that measure passed, the fall in prices would be so great that it was probable he might not obtain more for his four quarters than he now did for his three. He had heard with much regret those remarks of his noble Friend which seemed to impute idleness and want of energy to the English farmer—the fact being, that there was no part of the world in which a better system of husbandry prevailed—no country in which so much was produced, in comparison to the space cultivated; as was proved by eminent statistical writers, both in France and America. A most eminent statistical writer declared, that while the average produce of wheat in France was fourteen bushels to the acre, and while it was fifteen bushels in America, the produce in England was immeasurably superior to either country. The same writer also stated, that while the cattle, sheep, and pigs of England had doubled since 1710, in the whole of France, matters as regarded live stock remained almost in *statu quo*, although the amount of population and the territorial extent greatly exceeded that of England. His noble Friend who moved the second reading of the Bill, said he did not

lay much stress upon the famine in Ireland—he did not support the Bill on that ground alone. The noble Duke on the cross bench had happily observed, that very different opinions had been given in the other House, for the introduction of the measure. He thought that was one point on which the country had a right to complain. The opinions which had been advanced in its favour had not always been consistent; they had varied with every varying circumstance, and made to shift as party tactics required. On such a question the views of the Government should be intelligible, and distinctly laid down—not even the shadow of a doubt ought to rest upon them. He had no doubt that the right hon. Gentleman who filled the office of First Minister of the Crown had consulted what he conscientiously believed to be the best interests of the country; he acquitted him of acting from any sordid or ungenerous motive, but he must be forgiven for saying that he did not think that he and those who had acted with him had done that which public men should do. He did not think that the position taken up in reference to the country was an ingenuous one, or their manner of treating a great and honourable party had been fair. In public as in private life, any departure from the straightforward path of honesty was sure to be punished—retribution was sure to follow in the loss of all moral influence to the guilty party. However much he deprecated the measure, he would have felt it more deeply painful to have opposed it, had it been supported by the noble Duke behind him. Nothing could erase from his memory the events of the last autumn. No after agreements, no after explanations, could ever lessen or impair the effects of the resignation of the noble Duke and his other noble Friends who were now Ministers of the Crown. He well knew that in the noble Duke's (the Duke of Wellington's) long career of public life, there rested not a speck on the stainless mirror of his honour. He could not forget the practical sagacity with which the noble Duke had long led his party; neither could he cease to recollect the debt of deep gratitude which the people of this country owed to the noble Duke; he could not forget that which was an old story, that but for the noble Duke we might have neither Corn Laws nor country to save. It was formerly said that if the Corn Laws were repealed 2,000,000 of acres of the best land in England would

be thrown out of cultivation, and 6,000,000 of people would be thrown out of employment, and reduced to beggary and despair. Now for his own part he must confess he had little faith in political prophecies of any kind, whether made by himself or by others; but he knew that in a great measure tenants were guided by the impressions of their landlords, and that those feelings had a material effect upon the march of improvement. There was one fact he wished to mention here. He could assure their Lordships, he had heard of an individual who, before this measure was propounded, intended to invest no less than 150,000*l.* in agricultural improvements; and though he was a person who expressed no great fear with regard to the result of the project, yet he declined investing his money until he saw what would be the effect of it. That was an important fact, and he was very much afraid that the example of this person would be followed by many others in consequence of the new legislative policy of Her Majesty's Government. Men would now pause before they invested their capital in the improvement of the soil, and their hesitation would be fully justified under such circumstances; their proceedings would be marked by temperate caution and prudence. They would not enter into doubtful speculations—they would wait until they saw the effect of this great practical experiment; and it must be productive of baneful results. His noble and learned Friend (Lord Brougham) who spoke last night, referred to the question of the price of food, and expressed his hope and belief that the price of bread under the new system would be moderate. But he (the Earl of Carnarvon) very much disliked the proposed measure, because he thought it would have quite as much tendency to make the price extraordinarily high—high to a ruinous extent, as to effect a great reduction in it. If this Bill passed we must necessarily depend in a great measure for a supply of corn from the northern parts of Europe, where land was little burdened with local taxation, and labour was wonderfully cheap. The effect of that competition would be to throw the lighter and indifferent descriptions of land out of cultivation, and consequently deprive a large portion of the labouring population of the means of employment. What, then, would become of the English people if we had a deficient harvest, and that we required a large

supply of grain from foreign States? We should be perfectly helpless. The same cause which affected the harvests in this country, generally affected in the same way the harvests in foreign countries; and when the Governments of those foreign States did not actually forbid the exportation of grain, they would, for self-preservation as well as for the purpose of increasing their revenue, place a very large export duty upon it, which would have nearly the same effect. Under such a system he thought the people of England would not be very great gainers by a free trade in agriculture. It was said that the United States would remedy this difficulty; but, generally speaking, their harvests were affected as much as our own. The scarcity and plenty at different times, which he believed must be the result of the proposed system, would produce such violent fluctuations in prices as to inflict great injury on both the producers and consumers. When, according to Mr. Hudson, corn could be brought from Hamburgh and sold here at 25*s.* a quarter, it was a period of our greatest peril; and the result he (the Earl of Carnarvon) believed would be the same if the measure before the House came into operation. If a regular corn trade was established, he could not doubt that foreign countries would give every facility, compatible, of course, with their own interests, to maintain it; and that even British capital would rush into those countries, offering, as they then would, so fair and ample a field for speculation. It had been well laid down that when an article could be progressively increased to any extent, that its price would not rise in proportion to the increased demand, but that, in the long run, the price would fall. A steady increase in the demand was frequently met by a more than equivalent amount of production, and a reduction of price was the consequence. The tea trade had been very appositely referred to in support of this view. There had been a prodigiously increasing demand for tea from China within the last few years, and yet there had been a progressive fall in price. Why should not the same results attend a demand for foreign corn, and an increased importation of foreign food into this country? Considering the whole circumstances of the case, he believed they were treading on difficult if not on dangerous ground—that they were embarking on a course of hazardous legislation. Agriculture in this country had made gigantic strides—that

was admitted by the noble Lord who introduced the Bill; but he said, at the same time, that the greater was the occasion for the adoption of such a measure. But he (the Earl of Carnarvon) asked, when the country was in a state of prosperity—when millions of capital were invested in agriculture on the faith of their own protective laws—was it wise, was it fair, on the part of the Government and the Legislature towards the agricultural interests, to deprive them of the only chance of working out that system of improvement? for it was a consummation most devoutly to be wished which should enable England, from her own resources, to produce sufficient food for the sustenance of the people. A noble Lord in the other House had collected some valuable statistical information in reference to the agricultural improvements which had taken place in this country. Sir H. Parnell, when Chairman of the Corn Committee in 1833, stated that the agricultural produce of the kingdom had increased one-fourth during the ten previous years; Mr. Wakefield, in 1801, computed the average produce of the wheat lands of England at seventeen bushels an acre; Mr. McCulloch, in 1840, estimated the average produce per acre at twenty-six bushels; and, in 1844, Mr. McGregor estimated it at twenty-eight bushels. These facts showed that the protective system was favourable to agricultural improvement. They were told that importation would never be prevented, and that even in the last war large quantities of corn were imported from France. But he believed the year 1810 was a very peculiar one; there was an unusually abundant harvest in France, and a deficient one in England; he understood, too, that certain parties obtained influence through some of Napoleon's marshals, and an exportation was allowed that, under ordinary circumstances, would not have been permitted. But if the argument founded on the advantage of being independent of other countries for our supply of food was tenable in 1840, he did not see that anything had occurred to make it untenable at the present time. He did not believe the principle was asserted merely to draw a convenient roar from the British lion of the day. Perhaps he might be allowed to say a word or two on the circumstances connected with the proposal of this measure by Her Majesty's Government. There was in this country a strong and ardent feeling in favour of plain straightforward honesty of conduct. The eyes of the pub-

lic, too, were narrowly fixed on the conduct of public men; and, whether it was prejudice or not, the people to a great extent connected character with consistency. He thanked God it was so; for it was not for the interest of either public or private life that sudden departure from long recorded opinions should pass without involving some kind of penalty. Therefore he could not look upon the policy of the Government as a mere question of defective party management—he looked upon it as wrong and unprincipled—he would not say intentionally so; but if ever there was a House of Commons elected upon a given principle—if ever there was a Government bound by the circumstances of their formation to the principle of protection, it was the Government of his noble Friends. The political history of their lives was a continued pledge; they were pledged by their language in office, by their language out of office; they were bound by acts stronger than any verbal pledges. That the constituencies were unintentionally misled he was quite willing to believe; but still they were misled, and he did not think that the Government of the country, when they had discovered their mistake, had any right to take advantage of their own wrong, and to give effect to their own error. The agricultural constituencies of this country would never have wielded the electoral franchise in favour of his noble Friends, if they had had the remotest notion that they intended so soon to depart from their former professions. The strong man was lulled to sleep by his confidence in their intentions; and now that he had yielded his weapons to them, they hoped to vanquish him unarmed without a struggle. Under the banner of protection the Government of the country ventured to the battle-field against what was then termed the maddeningery of cheap bread; they secured the followers of the party, and then drove the noble Lords on the other side of the House out of office. They were ejected from office for the crime of proposing an insufficient protection of an 8s. duty; and now the First Minister of the Crown came down and proposed a virtual duty of 4s. Under no conceivable circumstances should the Government of the country arrogate their own enactments. They should do it with the utmost degree of caution and care, for the sake of the country, which should place confidence in public men. Without intending to say anything in the slightest degree offensive to his noble

Friends, who had been placed in a most embarrassing position, still he thought that, all the circumstances considered, this was too strong a departure from those fair and recognised principles which ought to actuate public men towards each other and towards their country. He would ask, if the principle was questionable, was the policy good as far as it had been developed? Was the utter alienation of such a great element in the constitution of things in this country as the great landed interest a wise and statesman-like policy? Alas, to what a state of moral weakness had this unhappy policy reduced one of the most powerful Governments that had ever existed in this country. Like Samson they had been shorn of that which was the implement of their strength, by a single stroke, in the plenitude of their power, as yet untouched by the faintest germ of decay. There never was, he believed, a Government possessed of more real power for useful purposes—there never was a Government which from the peculiar circumstances of its position was enabled to do more of great and useful acts—there never was a Government from whom the people of this country would have accepted more of real and solid reform. Would to God that the better counsels of his noble Friend the noble Duke, and of his noble Friend the late Secretary of the Colonies, had in November last prevailed, over what he must term the infatuated councils of that day; but it was otherwise decreed, and all the confidence had been destroyed, and all the strength which was given for better and for higher purposes, had been cast away. Many who were lately their staunchest friends were now in open opposition to the Government; others, who actually sympathized with their policy in another place, yet were unable, from a sense of duty, to support them, and were compelled to retire from Parliament; others, protesting in their speeches against their policy, and yet voting for it with a heavy and misgiving heart. Could a policy be statesmanlike which produced such results as these? Could a policy which placed every human being connected with it in a false position, from the Minister in the Cabinet, who was known a short time since to have been a strenuous advocate of the Corn Law, down to the humblest follower of the party, who scarcely knew what to do between his conscience and his duty—could such a policy be a statesmanlike policy? Could this measure come before their Lordships with

any real weight, when it was in startling opposition to the decision at which the House had arrived a year ago? This time last year the House of Commons had decided against this measure by a large majority; this year it had decided by as large a majority in its favour. Which spoke the real sense of the country—the decision which was arrived at in a period of calmness and freedom from excitement, or that which had just been adopted under the pressure of the most conflicting and agitating emotions that could afflict the mind of man? It was the duty of the Government of the country to raise the tone of public morals, not to elevate or depress in any way the standard of political honour; and he did not think that the Government of the country should have called upon the House of Commons to do that from which the most highminded of their supporters had shrunk, and thrown up their seats. Talk of delegates—one of the greatest mischiefs that could arise from this measure was, that it went directly to the establishment of delegation, as the only mode the constituencies could have of ensuring some kind of representation. Under these circumstances, Ministers should have referred the question to the free and open verdict of the English people. They should have said to the great interests, “We have changed our opinion—have you changed yours? Take back the trust which you gave us under this impression, or confirm it under the altered circumstances of the case. We will not avail ourselves of any false or ungenerous advantages; we will not fight you with the weapons with which your unsuspecting confidence has armed us. We come to you in what we believe to be the name of the country, though with altered views. If you adhere to your own opinions, we ask for a fair field, and the country to decide between us. Had his noble Friends adopted this course, however much he might have differed from them in opinion, they would have won the approbation and admiration of every gallant heart. It was for the purpose of rectifying this error into which he conceived they had fallen, rather than permanently to oppose the progress of the Bill, that he should give his vote against the second reading, for the purpose of obtaining for the people and for the agricultural interest an opportunity of pronouncing their opinion upon it. Let him beg noble Lords not to consider that, in voting for the Amendment of his noble Friend, the noble Duke

on the cross bench, they were deciding irrevocably against this measure. They were not doing so; they were only seeming for the country that breathing-time of which it had been deprived by what he must term, at the time when this measure was brought forward, a panic-stricken policy. That House had ever been considered the guardian of the rights of the people: it was, he believed, revered as such. Let not their Lordships divest themselves of that sacred character. Their Lordships' House had ever been looked up to for that restraining judgment which tempered precipitate change, without firmly opposing a single object of useful innovation. Considerate men of all classes, agricultural, commercial, and manufacturing, would not disapprove of a considerate policy. Let not the cry of that true-hearted body of men, the yeomanry of England, who had been connected for so many centuries with their Lordships' families—let not that cry come up to them in vain—they did not ask for favour at their Lordships' hands, they only asked for justice. They craved no partial, no final decision: they only prayed that, as far as this question was concerned, they might not be practically blotted out from the representation of their country, or sacrificed, without having an opportunity of exercising, at the determination of this question, that legitimate influence which was vested in them by the Constitution of their country; but of which they complained they had been robbed, by no fault, no negligence of their own, but by the most extraordinary change of opinion of those who governed, and those who represented them, that the yeomanry of any country were ever subject to. They asked their Lordships to exercise their legitimate functions with that caution which they applied to the meanest case of property that came under their notice. In this case, the property of the yeomanry to the amount of millions, and millions and millions, was involved. They prayed their Lordships to exercise their functions, not for the purpose of permanently defeating this measure, if it should prove to be the real object of the national feeling, but only to ascertain that point. They implored their Lordships to stand in the gap between them and what they considered ruin, unjustly and unnecessarily inflicted, and secure for them that which Englishmen should never ask in vain at the hands of British Peers—fair play. Their Lordships were told last night that there was danger,

and there was danger lest honourable minds should be led to do that which they ought not to do for fear of having unhandsome motives attributed to them. This should be urgently pressed upon their Lordships. If they were struggling, as assuredly they were, for the happiness, the welfare, and the prosperity of their country, and not for selfish advantages, were they, on account of personal imputations—painful unquestionably, as all imputations were—to shrink from the performance of that which they felt convinced was their duty? If they were to shrink from their duty for any such motives, then he would say, but without offence and in the mildest manner, that they had not the requisite courage for manly and useful legislation. A noble Earl, who was not now in his place, had on the preceding evening stated that they ought not to throw any obstacles in the way of the Bill, or to impede its progress in any degree by prolonging the debate, for that it was necessary for the welfare of the community that the measure should pass as speedily as possible; but he implored of them to reflect whether they would not best be consulting for the interests of all classes, and best acquitting themselves of that high duty which devolved upon them from their position, by rejecting the measure now, and affording the population of this country, whose interests were so vitally concerned, a full and fair opportunity of deciding for themselves, and letting their voices be heard in a manner not to be misunderstood? If measures were to be considered as passed before they were assented to, they had better be given up. Their Lordships had better consult their dignity, by abandoning at once the task of discussion, and, adopting the advice given by a noble Friend, register hereafter, in humble and obedient silence, the edicts of the House of Commons. The removal of agitation by such means would only bring fresh agitation. Who could for a moment doubt that if this Bill passed through the House on such grounds, their Lordships would have to pass a variety of sweeping legislative measures? Let them think for a moment upon the consequences to that Church Establishment from which they derived half the blessings they enjoyed. If the policy now proposed were to be acted upon, that Establishment might not be long permitted to exist in its present form. They should bethink them what a dangerous precedent they might be instituting by adopting such a measure as the present. They

knew not for what strange innovations they might be opening the door. Might they not be told ere long, that hereditary legislation was not compatible nor consistent with the advanced ideas of the age, and that although those assembled in that House to-night might be allowed to retain their seats in that assembly, the hereditary right for their posterity to do so would not be permitted to descend to those who were dearer to them than themselves? If such a principle as that now contended for were to be sanctioned, popular clamour would demand sacrifice after sacrifice of the Government and the Legislature, which they would not have the power any longer to resist; because they would have learned to live upon concession, and to seek popularity, not in the wholesome principle of laws well administered, and interests quietly advanced, but rather by a series of *coups d'état*, which though they might dazzle the public eye and captivate the public ear for the moment, were not based on those true and solid foundations whereon all wise measures of legislation should repose. Their Lordships had repeatedly expressed their opinion on subjects of this nature, which, however, were far less hazardous in their probable operation; but were they now prepared to show to the country that on the gravest question which could affect the welfare of the British people, they were about scornfully to reject all expostulations—all representations of those most deeply concerned—and to advance the interests of one class of the community, by immolating those of another? Would such a course of proceeding raise their character with the country for political faith and consistency?—or, would it not rather favour the impression that they would acquiesce in a compromise, were such proposed? In fact, what would the public think of them—yesterday supporting protection, and to-day advocating free trade? He would give to the Bill his unequivocal opposition, and he could not resume his seat without observing that the course he was about to adopt on this question was the only one that he believed to be consistent with honour. Unblemished honour ought to be ever the leading characteristic of English noblemen. It was theirs by the right of birth—it was, as the poet had expressed it “part of them rather than theirs”—honour, pure, unblemished, and stainless, was theirs by birth, and ought to accompany them unsuspected and unspotted from the cradle to the grave.

Such was the opinion he entertained of the noble Lords who constituted that assembly; and he would feel that the light of that House, which once beamed so brilliantly, would be at once and for ever dimmed in the eyes of the country—that their occupation would be gone, and their purpose fulfilled, if that honour were to be tarnished by sanctioning such principles as were now sought to be introduced; and it would be of little consequence to him whether their Lordships' career were to be brought to an early close, or whether they were to be permitted by their new masters, the lords of the League, to cumber with their useless splendour the land which they could no longer benefit.

The EARL OF MALMESBURY said, that he was not at all surprised at the anxiety which was evinced by the noble Lords to hear the noble Earl who had risen with him on behalf of the Government, after the very able speech that had been just delivered by his noble Friend; but although he admitted that it might be considered presumptuous in him to address the House after the noble Earl who had just sat down, still, when he found himself face to face opposed to those men whom he had faithfully and zealously supported for a number of years, he was induced to break through his usual rule of giving a tacit vote, and to intrude himself on their attention while he offered a few observations. He felt deeply the situation in which he was placed by the deplorable event of November last. He had been accustomed from early years to surrender his own opinion with almost blind confidence in deference to that of the noble Duke opposite (the Duke of Wellington) and the other Members of his Government. For that noble Duke he entertained the sincerest esteem, and that deep affection which every Englishman felt for him, because he believed, if it had not been for the signal services he had rendered his country, their Lordships might not now be discharging those functions they had inherited from their ancestors. No one could feel personally greater respect for the noble Duke; but he almost as deeply felt, and sincerely deplored, the course which, in his high sense of duty, the noble Duke had thought it necessary to adopt with reference to the present measure. If the Bill had been brought before their Lordships under ordinary circumstances, there would have been but one course to pursue—but one way to treat it. They would have considered its merits

as it affected the interests of the people of this country, and the public good, and would have pronounced an opinion of its merits according to their conviction; but he hoped he would not be considered wanting in courtesy if, after the way in which the Bill had been introduced, he gave expression to the opinion that now two reasons existed which might influence them in their deliberations, and induce them to pass the Bill, rather than the conviction that it would be for the good of the country. He might be borne out in this position by referring to the division which took place on the 18th of April, 1842, on the Motion made by the noble Lord behind him (Lord Brougham) to repeal all duties on corn, and in favour of which only four Peers voted in addition to the noble Mover, while 119 Peers had voted against the noble Lord. Might not he (the Earl of Malmesbury) then say without discourtesy, that if the Bill were passed, it would be passed—not because their Lordships entertained the conscientious conviction that it was best for the country; but either because they felt the necessity of placing implicit and unbounded confidence in the First Minister of the Crown, or because they conceived it to be loudly and sincerely demanded by the majority of the people of England. These were the only two reasons which he could conceive could induce the noble Lords, who, in April, 1842, had voted against the Motion of his noble Friend, and left him in a minority of five, to support a similar measure now. He would not now go into the arguments which had been adduced in favour of the present policy, though, had time permitted, he would have been glad to touch upon them; but he would pass them over, and allude to the acknowledgment that the present measure was a great experiment. It was not such a great experiment as they believed. A principle analogous to that of free trade in corn had been tried in another part of the British dominions. He alluded to the Hebrides, the Western Isles of Scotland, and the coast opposite to those Islands. Their Lordships might not be acquainted with that locality, but it had been his fortune to visit it on three different occasions. Owing to the irregularity of the beach, and the deep bays and indentations of the coasts, it possessed between three or four thousand miles of seaboard. On the rocks which bordered that seaboard, there grew a production which appeared to be a peculiar gift of Providence to that wild and de-

solate shore, called “kelp,” which, on being burnt, gave large quantities of alkali. In the year 1827, the persons employed in the manufacture of alkali numbered 180,000. Previous to the year 1829, that product was protected by a duty of 8*l.* 10*s.* per ton; but in subsequent years it was reduced to 6*l.* 10*s.*; in 1830 that protection was lowered to 5*l.*; in 1831, to 2*l.*; and lately it had been entirely abolished. Now what was the consequence? The islands were suddenly reduced from a state of flourishing prosperity under protection, to the greatest destitution by the withdrawal of it, and to a state similar to that in which, in his opinion, the agricultural districts of this country would be reduced by the passing of the proposed measure. When he visited the islands in 1839, they were in a most deplorable state—the ancient chiefs had sold their estates—a few of the population were employed as shepherds in tending flocks of sheep; but the great majority were reduced to the greatest distress by being deprived of their labour in consequence of the duty on kelp being abolished. And for whose benefit had those disastrous results been brought about? Why, for the benefit of the Neapolitans, who supplied this country with sulphur, and this was proved by the temporary activity which was restored to the kelp trade during the disputes with Naples a few years ago respecting sulphur. Mr. Poulett Thompson, who had been instrumental in obtaining the abrogation of the duty, had afterwards visited the islands with him (Lord Malmesbury), and was much struck with the deplorable state of destitution to which they had been reduced, by depriving them of protection to this sole article on which their existence depended; but being a free trader, though he deplored the loss to the inhabitants, he justified it on the principle that the interests of the minority should bow before those of the majority. As a general principle, that was undoubtedly true; but when the minority consisted of thousands and tens of thousands of families, it became a question whether the Government ought not to have paused before it sanctioned such a measure, and calmly balanced the loss and the gain. It had been said by a noble Earl, who had spoken with great ability that night, that the present was a landlord’s question. Did the noble Earl believe that this country was entirely rented by farmers, and that the occupier and landlord were not very often one and

the same person? By a return which he held in his hand, having reference to his own parish of Christchurch, one of the largest in England, and containing 35,000 acres, he found that only 5 persons, including himself, held 500 acres each; only 8 between 200 and 500, 12 between 100 and 200, 11 between 50 and 100, 22 between 20 and 50, and 246 between 15 and 20 acres. Now, he would ask, who would suffer most by these measures of the Government in the parish of Christchurch? He would ask, whether those 246 persons would not suffer according to their means far more than himself, if any depreciation should take place in the value of produce in consequence of the passing of this measure. With regard to the right rev. Prelates, he would remind them that they were the guardians of the interests of the parochial clergy. To those interests they were bound to attend, though on this question the interests of the parochial clergy and their own might not be the same. Some of the right rev. Prelates had fixed incomes; but every clergyman by the Commutation of Tithe Act was paid, not by a fixed income, but according to the old quantity of grain raised when agriculture was comparatively imperfect; and they would be paid according to the new price, however depreciated it might be after the passing of this Bill. He was, moreover, apprehensive of the danger likely to be incurred by making this country dependent on foreign nations for food in time of war; and to show that that fear was not altogether imaginary, he would refer to a correspondence that took place between the Earl of Suffolk and Mr. Harris, (the noble Lord's ancestor,) at a time when the latter Gentleman was British Minister at Prussia, in the time of Frederick the Great. A Treaty was made with Queen Anne, and confirmed by the Treaty of Utrecht, by which Dantzic came into the power of Frederick, who immediately caused very high duties to be placed upon the imports of British goods; and on being remonstrated with by Mr. Harris on behalf of his Government, Frederick the Great caused the ports of Dantzic to be completely closed up against the British. This was done at a time when it was the only place that this country could obtain any corn from. He did not wish to speak harshly against the Prime Minister. He did not wish to impute dishonesty or dishonourable feeling to him; but it was a deplorable fact when the Prime Minister came down to the House of Commons and made the

appalling confession that for thirty years, and during the reign of four Sovereigns, (to use his own words,) he had misgoverned and misguided this country. But if he did not impute dishonesty to the right hon. Baronet, what could he say of his judgment and courage? What had been the effect upon his party of this conduct? Was that the Minister for whom their Lordships would sacrifice their conscientious convictions? Was that the Minister for whom the Peers were to become converted without being convinced? As a plain country gentleman, he must say, that such a Minister and such a man he would neither support, nor follow, nor serve. Had such a Bill as this been called for by the country? The verdict as to protection and free trade was given by the people in 1841. There had been no general election since that year; but every single election that had lately occurred had gone to prove that the people had no confidence in the Minister, and that the constituencies were anxious to dismiss those former representatives by whom they had been deceived and betrayed. But if he were wrong in this statement, the real opinion of the people was easily ascertained; and it was their Lordships' duty to ascertain it. The House of Lords had been made, by the Constitution of the country, a bulwark against the tyranny of the Crown on the one hand, and the encroachments of the people on the other. If they gave way, on the one hand, to the allurements of the Minister, either to save him from voluntary and disgraceful difficulties; or on the other hand, to the rash impatience of the people themselves, they at once abolished the conditions by which they were created. But he would never believe that such could be the case, for their course was, by the Constitution, and by the laws of the country, made so easy, that they could not mistake it. This Bill had been sent to them by a clear majority of the House of Commons; but he denied that it had been sent to them by a clean majority. To such a measure, so sent up to them, he could not give his assent. If, on the other hand, they forced the Minister to a dissolution, and a new House of Commons sent up a Bill which had passed by a clean majority, he should, in that case, feel it to be his duty, as an English Peer, to bow to the decision of an undoubted and indubitable majority of the English people.

The EARL OF HADDINGTON assured their Lordships that his anxiety to address the House when the noble Earl who had

just sat down had risen with him, did not proceed from any notion that he was about to perform a very agreeable duty. Neither in that or the other House had he ever risen with more unfeigned reluctance or with feelings of greater pain. That reluctance and that pain did not proceed from any doubt or hesitation in his own mind as to the line of conduct he had pursued; but arose from feelings of the deepest regret at finding himself opposed to so great a number of their Lordships for whom he felt the greatest respect, with whom he entertained so many opinions in common, and with whom it had been for so many years his pleasure as well as his pride to act. The noble Earl who spoke the last but one, towards the conclusion of his speech uttered a sentiment in which he entirely concurred—that it was well for the country that in public opinion consistency and character were combined together. He concurred in that sentiment; but, like many other sound opinions, if carried out to its utmost consequences, it might deter men from avowing even an honest change of opinion, which it could never be derogatory to a man's character to avow under any circumstances, if the change were honest, and which on questions of pure expediency, like that before the House—for he denied that it involved any of those great principles which some noble Lords, in a spirit of such astonishing exaggeration, had connected with it—he should never be ashamed to avow. But how far he had changed his opinions on the Corn Laws he would now beg leave to state, for he thought that noble Lords on the cross benches would not insist upon judging his present conduct by their opinions on the subject, but rather by his own. He had for a number of years before the formation of the present Government been of opinion, that there had been a great deal of exaggeration on both sides of the question. He had not given vent to his opinions in Parliament, perhaps, for he really forgot how long it was since he had made a speech on the subject.

A NOBLE LORD: In 1841.

THE EARL OF HADDINGTON had not the slightest recollection of having made a speech on the Corn Laws in 1841.

EARL STANHOPE: You made a speech in 1841, in which the Corn Law was mentioned.

THE EARL OF HADDINGTON: That might be, but he had no recollection of having made a speech on the Corn Law

for many years. However, he had long been in the habit of expressing his opinion to his friends in private conversation, that the repeal of the Corn Laws would make no great difference to the landed interest, and that agriculture would not be injured, were it not for the panic which would accompany the change. That panic once allayed, matters, he thought, would go on pretty much as before. He was bound in fairness to state, also, that he thought there was much exaggeration upon this subject in the views of the manufacturers; for he could not believe that the alternate seasons of depression and prosperity, of abundance and glut, were to be attributed to the Corn Law; and he thought that, if any injury to the manufacturers had been derived from protection, they must not stop short at the Corn Law, when it must be attributed also to the protection which they were so very anxious to maintain to their own interests. With these opinions he came to London on the 31st of last October; illness had prevented him from attending the Cabinet Council held on that day; but he had attended that of the 1st of November, when this question was discussed. Now, unquestionably, with respect to Ireland he did not think at that time that the Cabinet had sufficient information to enable them to adopt so strong and extensive a measure as this; but, though he did not think that the state of Ireland was a sufficiently strong ground of itself for adopting so strong a measure, he must own that he had heard with great surprise the doubts which had been thrown, in the course of the debate, on the state of destitution of the people in that unhappy country. He held in his hand a statement of the prices of potatoes up to the 24th of March throughout the country, which had only that day been laid on the Table, and he must say that it was a most alarming statement. However, he did not found the justification of the course he was now following on the state of Ireland. If, therefore, the right hon. Baronet had told his Colleagues, without any reference to the state of Ireland at all, that his opinions on the Corn Laws had changed, that he held them to be impolitic to the landed interest, and unjust to the rest of the community, and that he was anxious that his Colleagues should reconsider the whole question with reference to the final adjustment of it, he (the Earl of Haddington) should not have been surprised at that statement;

he would not have shrunk from that inquiry, but would have gone cheerfully into it, and have expressed no difference of opinion from his right hon. Friend. Well, two of his noble Friends adhered strongly to their opinions against any change in the Corn Laws, and the Government was broken up: but if, after the statement of his right hon. Friend to his Colleagues, the Government had gone on and been a united Government, he should have consented to form a part of it, and for these reasons: he felt that the Corn Laws were gone—that they were doomed from the moment that, in addition to that great accession of strength which those who opposed them had gained in public opinion, his right hon. Friend had thrown the weight of his great authority into the scale against them. Then there had arisen great apprehensions in the course of the month that had elapsed on the subject of the peace and prosperity of the manufacturing districts, and considerable alarm of a stagnation of trade which was coincident with the alarm arising out of the railway speculations; and that was one of the elements which had led to his decision. Moreover, when his right hon. Friend opened to the Cabinet the whole plan of his policy, he (the Earl of Haddington) certainly felt that that made an entirely new question of it. Still, he had some apprehensions, and his apprehensions were founded on the effect the change in the policy of the Cabinet was likely to have on the Conservative party. The question then was, “Shall this subject be brought forward by the right hon. Baronet at head of Her Majesty’s Government; or shall he resign, and shall it be brought forward by another Government already pledged to free trade?” He certainly had felt that the great conservative body of this country would be more offended by seeing the right hon. Baronet advocating, out of office, the principles of free trade, than they would be by seeing him proposing boldly, as Minister, that which was the result of his own honest convictions. However, the Government was broken up; the noble Lord on whom Her Majesty laid Her commands to form a Government, attempted to do so and failed, and the Government of Sir Robert Peel was reinstated. He (the Earl of Haddington) did not think, after what he had already stated, that he need give any explanation as to his conduct in continuing to hold office. For himself he would say, in the most

solemn manner, that in the course he had adopted, he had not been actuated by any love of office whatever; for he was not only ready, but should be glad to lay down office to-morrow, and remain a private man for the rest of his life; and certainly there was nothing that any Minister could do for him, or advise Her Majesty to do for him, that could compensate for the loss of his fortune, which must follow from this measure, if the apprehensions of the noble Lords on the cross benches were realized; for the greater part of his rents were paid on the price of corn in the county town, and consequently, if this measure caused a depreciation of 20 per cent. in prices, as the noble Lords on the cross benches held it would do, he should lose one fifth of his income. He must say that there had been much exaggeration on the part of several noble Lords who had opposed this measure, as to the results which might be anticipated from it. Some noble Lords had not been content with prophesying that all manner of evils would follow the adoption of the principle of free trade, so far as the prosperity of the agricultural interest was concerned, but they had also prophesied ruin and destruction to Church and State, and had predicted that it would eventually lead to general anarchy and confusion. His noble Friend on the cross benches (the Duke of Richmond), had opened this formidable battery of awful prophecies, and had concluded his speech by a tremendous announcement of the evils which were to follow the adoption of this Bill. [The Duke of Richmond: I referred to the results of clamour and agitation.] His noble Friend was followed in this course by the noble Duke who sat next him; and he must own that, to his no small astonishment, the example was also followed by his noble Friend (Lord Stanley) in one of the most able speeches he had ever heard in that House. That noble Lord had displayed first-rate Parliamentary talent; and this display had been most gratifying to him (the Earl of Haddington), when he considered the character of that noble Lord, and the high position he was one day destined to fill in this country. Although he lamented that the formidable battery of that noble Lord’s eloquence had been directed against the present measure, and though he thought much of his argument erroneous, misapplied, and exaggerated, he had been rejoiced to see the strong Conservative principle

maintained throughout his speech. That noble Lord (Lord Stanley) read an extract from the speech of a radical man, delivered at some meeting of the Anti-Corn-Law League. He must own he was astonished that his noble Friend should illustrate his argument by quoting that man's speech. He had no doubt that man expressed his sincere convictions; but he spoke excessive nonsense, and that his noble Friend knew very well. If he (the Earl of Haddington) believed that his right hon. Friend (Sir R. Peel) was pursuing his present course from a cowardly submission to the clamour of the Anti-Corn-Law League, or that he would follow up this measure by further submission to the same body, no human power could induce him to become a consenting party to this Bill. He was convinced that the evils and dangers anticipated by his noble Friends as likely to result from the adoption of this Bill, were much more likely to ensue if their Lordships threw out the measure. His decided opinion was—and it was an opinion he had long entertained—that the principle of free trade in corn had been growing in favour with the people of this country. He believed that a large portion of the landed interest itself had ceased to apprehend any evil consequences from the adoption of that principle, and were anxious for a settlement of the question. This Bill had been sent up by a majority of nearly 100 from the other House of Parliament, and he considered that very serious consequences might ensue from its rejection by their Lordships. The Government were told that they ought to have appealed to the country on the question. It was very easy for irresponsible Members of that House to talk of appeals to the country on a question which, as it materially affected the food of the people, must necessarily give rise to great agitation and excitement; but he believed that if Sir R. Peel and his Colleagues had determined upon appealing to the country, they would have taken a most fatal course. He admitted that the Government had incurred great responsibility in bringing forward this measure; but he thought that responsibility would have been greatly increased if they had thrown the whole question open to agitation at a time when the feelings of the people were much excited on the subject. Why, he would like to know, was not the House of Commons competent to deal with the subject? The Government had been charged by the noble Earl near

him with misleading the people, with misleading the constituencies, and with misleading their supporters in 1841, by not declaring what their intentions were. Undoubtedly, if at that time the Government had had any intention of proposing a measure of this kind, it would have been most unbecoming and disgraceful if they had not given some intimation of their views; but the fact was they had not entertained any such intention, for Sir R. Peel had openly and boldly avowed a complete change of opinion on this question. [The Duke of Richmond: Hear, hear.] His noble Friend on the cross benches cheered that statement. Did not the noble Duke believe that Sir R. Peel had changed his opinion? It was impossible to doubt that his right hon. Friend's conduct had been dictated by a strong and sincere sense of public duty. What earthly object could he have in proposing such a measure as this? Could it be conceived that a man of great sagacity and foresight, occupying the highest position in the kingdom, possessing the confidence of his Sovereign, of his party, and of the country, would wantonly, like a madman, throw away his power, without any assignable motive? He was convinced, that before many years had elapsed, it would be acknowledged that his right hon. Friend had done more essential service to this country than any Minister for a long series of years. He certainly should be glad if it were in his power to deal with the details of this question in such a manner as to carry conviction to the minds of any of their Lordships; but he must own he felt very unequal to it; he was but a very poor political economist. But those who had addressed the House had already done ample justice to the measure itself, and none more than a noble Earl on the other side of the House, who spoke early in the debate, and who made a speech of the most distinguished ability, showing a most consummate knowledge of the subject. A noble Friend of his, stung by the eloquent eulogium pronounced last night upon Sir R. Peel by a noble and learned Lord, and fearful that the disposition to indulge in personalities might die away in the course of this dull debate, had, following the example of the noble Duke (the Duke of Richmond), discussed the distinction between the personal honour and the public character of statesmen. He thought it would have been more becoming in his noble Friend to have adhered to his resolution of not indulging in personalities,

especially considering the vote which the noble Marquess was about to give, and the friends around him were about to give; and considering that though Sir R. Peel had excited so strong a feeling among his friends and supporters, he, at least, brought forward a measure which the noble Marquess had proclaimed that he considered as the best that had ever been brought forward. [Lord NORMANBY: No, no!] That might not be the opinion of the noble Marquess; but he thought he had heard several other noble Lords on the opposite side of the House make such a statement. If he might judge, in particular, from the speech of a noble Earl whom he did not then see in his place (Earl Fitzwilliam), the noble Lords opposite had not much fault to find with the Bill—except that they would have preferred an immediate repeal of the Corn Laws. [*The Marquess of Normanby intimated his dissent.*] The noble Marquess shook his head; but he (the Earl of Haddington) suspected that the noble Marquess stood alone among his noble Friends—for certainly some of them had stated that they thought it would be a great deal better to have immediate repeal. There was no doubt, however, that the noble Lord was pledged to support the principle of the Bill; and accordingly it would have evidenced a more generous and liberal feeling if the noble Marquess had kept himself to that, and not indulged in personalities. He conceived that the great object of the Corn Law was to prevent fluctuation, to secure steadiness of price, and to make us independent of foreign nations. Now, with all the attention he had been able to pay to this question, he could not find that it had answered any one of those objects. He did believe that the Corn Law had to a certain degree—by having gained the confidence of the agricultural body—contributed to the improvement of the land. He meant that it had induced the agriculturist to invest capital in improvement. That opinion he still retained; but he did maintain that the change which was now proposed was much more likely to secure steady prices than the present law. He did not believe that fluctuations could ever be altogether avoided, for as long as they had changeable seasons they would have fluctuations; but he believed that by a free trade in corn; by the quantity which happened to be wanted, and which the interests of parties induced them to send to this country at the time when it was wanted; by its

coming in equally at all times, would secure a greater steadiness of price than at present. The tendency of the sliding scale, and indeed of all protection, was to accumulate a vast quantity of corn, and to inundate the market, perhaps at the most inconvenient moment, by the introduction of a large quantity of grain when it was not wanted. Why, he recollected that on one occasion 1,200,000 quarters, out of an importation of 1,800,000 quarters, were let into the market in one week, to the great injury of the farmer, who had sold the greater part of his crop at a low, or, at all events, a very reasonable price, in the hope that, at that part of the season, when the prices of grain generally rose, he would be able to indemnify himself, but who was deprived of this benefit, probably, by some trick of the market. With respect to the question of foreign supply, he was unwilling to go over the ground which other noble Lords had gone over in a manner which he could not hope to emulate; but he must say that he had no apprehension of not having a supply from abroad when it was wanted. The instance mentioned last night by his noble and learned Friend (Lord Brougham) of 1,500,000 quarters having found their way into this country in 1810, principally from France, was a strong proof of the groundlessness of the apprehension. His noble Friend who spoke last instanced a negotiation of his able and distinguished father, in 1773, at the Court of Berlin, and said that Frederick the Great determined, in spite of all the advice given him by his Ministers and diplomatists, to close the port of Dantzic. That was an isolated case, and could have no very important consequences; but there was now a public opinion even in absolute monarchies, which could not with impunity be defied. When it was for the benefit of the people that the Prussian ports should be opened, the King would never refuse it, or expose his people to any inconvenience or distress. With respect to excessive importations from abroad, he thought the apprehensions equally unfounded. He could not imagine where they were to come from. For twenty years previous to 1842—under the absolute protection which then existed—there had been enormous importations—in one year, for instance, to the extent of nearly 3,000,000 quarters; and he did not see how any increase could possibly occur under the proposed Bill—for where was it to come from? His noble Friend (Lord Stanley) had gone back to the days of

Edward IV. to show that protection had always prevailed in this country. He (the Earl of Haddington) would not go so far back, but would at once admit that, taking one period with another, that principle had regulated our legislation. That was true; but at the same time it had been constantly found necessary to change it, either in compliance with the wishes of the farmers, or from other causes; and even at periods when the protection was very low indeed, so low as to be almost nominal, not less than 3,000,000 more acres were brought into cultivation, in consequence of the increase of population. Had we not the same growing market now? He firmly believed that the increase of population would fully counterbalance any pressure that might at first arise from the passing of this measure. On the other hand, if its effect should be to bring corn within the means of thousands of our poorer fellow-countrymen, that would be a source of gratification to every benevolent heart. It was a fallacy to assert that the prosperity of the agricultural interest was solely to be measured by the price of wheat; and he felt quite convinced that if corn were at a reasonable price the landlords would still get as good rents, and the farmers make as good profits. The authority of the late Lord Spenceur had been quoted, to the effect that a repeal of the Corn Laws would not cause a fall of prices. That might be going too far; but this he would say, that he did believe if there was at first a slight depression, it would ultimately be counteracted; besides that there would be an improved system of husbandry, and a general prosperity in agriculture. It had been said that Her Majesty's Government were seeking, by unfair means, to induce their Lordships to agree to this Bill. He could assure them that they had no desire that their Lordships should give any but an honest verdict. But at the same time he thought they were bound to consider the time and the circumstances in which this measure was introduced. He did not believe that it would in the slightest degree diminish the legitimate influence of the aristocracy. He respected the important services they had rendered to their country; and he should heartily grieve that any thing should occur which could lessen in the slightest degree their influence with their neighbours in the country. It was, however, because he entertained these sentiments that he would regard with so much alarm the alternative of their Lord-

ships throwing this Bill out. He did believe that they would be entering on a hopeless conflict for the maintenance of a Corn Law, and that in such a contest they could not but be ultimately defeated. If this Bill were thrown out, nothing would be more likely than that those noble Lords who seemed so much to desire a dissolution would have the benefit of it, and that there would be a general election. His own impression was that the return of a new Parliament would show an overwhelming majority in favour of free trade, and that their Lordships would, under that pressure, be in a manner compelled to pass the Bill. Indeed, most of their Lordships who had spoken had stated that if the country really and deliberately decided in favour of free trade, the House would be compelled to accede to their request. Well, in the event of a general election, they would be directly and obviously yielding to pressure from without. Government had been taunted with yielding to the clamours of the Anti-Corn-Law League. Government had done no such thing. The League had been clamouring for he did not know how many years before the Government took the least notice of it. Let him be allowed to tell the House that the great success of the Anti-Corn-Law League was a fact which it was impossible either for the Government, or for their Lordships, or for the other House of Parliament, to overlook. The League was set a-going by a company of gentlemen whose proceedings he was not there to defend; on the contrary, he deprecated the language which they had held—he disliked the views and opinions which they entertained as much as could any of their Lordships. He disliked the principle of agitation—of organized agitation—as much as the noble Duke on the cross benches; but there were a great number of persons who had joined the League—of all shades of political opinion, and all classes of society—men, indeed, belonging to classes whose interest it was, as much as it was the interest of any, that the peace of the country should be maintained. Thousands of such persons were members of the League, with no feelings whatever—with no ulterior views whatever—other than the achievement of a free trade in corn. And how had they succeeded? Two short years ago, in Manchester and Liverpool, they met with little sympathy. Was that the case now? Their Lordships would recollect the thousands and thousands of pounds subscribed, not

only at Manchester, but throughout the country, for the sake of obtaining free trade; but besides this, he had seen very considerable changes in the opinion of the landed interest itself. The farmers appeared to wish only for a settlement of the question, and if they were alarmed at the possible effects of the Bill, no such eager demand for a settlement would be made; conscious as they must be that total Corn Law repeal was the only way by which the great question could now be disposed of. Throughout this debate he had been principally pained by the injustice done to his right hon. Friend at the head of the Government. Now, he did not think that there ever was a Minister at the head of affairs in this country who was more exclusively desirous of doing his duty—of being guided only by his sense of what was right, irrespective of anything else. He had been in the Cabinet between four and five years, and he could not be mistaken on the point. Never was there a Minister of greater and more unimpeachable integrity than the right hon. Baronet. He believed, too, that he was a man of the profoundest sagacity. [*Laughter.*] He would ask noble Lords who laughed how long it was since they entertained a different opinion upon the subject? He repeated that his right hon. Friend was a man of great political wisdom—he had the greatest confidence in his judgment; and their Lordships would recollect that it was not long since they had entertained the same feeling. It did not become him to prophesy; but he could only say, that if his right hon. Friend was right in his anticipations of what would be the result of the measure, he would turn out to be a great benefactor to the people of this country, and to no class more than to that of the landed aristocracy. The Government had been taunted with not having stated the probable results of their measure—with not having stated their expectations as to the probable price of corn. Now, a more preposterous and unreasonable proposition than to attempt to make the Government do anything of the sort he had never heard. When the Corn Bills of 1815, of 1822, of 1828, even of 1842, were introduced, nobody pretended to state exactly what he conceived the prices of corn would be. True, his right hon. Friend, in proposing the existing Corn Bill, anticipated in general terms that corn would fluctuate between 54s. and 58s.; but the result had not turned out to be so. There was, therefore, no inducement to attempt

to predict the probable prices of corn admitted free, when so little success had attended the anticipations which had been indulged in as to its probable cost when they had at all events a fixed rate of duty to guide them in their calculations. Although, then, a Minister might be fairly expected to say that he anticipated generally beneficial results from the measure, it was preposterous to ask him to enter into minute details as to those expected advantages. He thanked the House for the attention with which they had heard him; and he could assure them that he had never given a vote with less hesitation than he would that to affirm the proposition of Government.

The MARQUESS OF NORMANBY rose to explain: His noble Friend who had just sat down had completely misrepresented him—had put words which he never uttered into his mouth—had made him express opinions which he had never entertained, and had also imputed motives to him which would be most unworthy if they were not most improbable and absurd. He must, therefore, beg for a moment's attention to set himself right with their Lordships. His noble Friend had found fault with him because he had commented on the public character of the Prime Minister, stating that he (the Marquess of Normanby) had used strong and injurious language towards a man who was advancing the measure which he (the Marquess of Normanby) considered best for the interests of the country. When his noble Friend made that statement, he had, in a manner not unusual in the House, interrupted him by exclaiming "No." Upon which his noble Friend had stated that he (the Marquess of Normanby) saw no distinction between a fixed duty and a sliding scale. What he (the Marquess of Normanby) had stated was, that he should have preferred a fixed duty, and that if a fixed duty could not be imposed, he should have preferred the immediate extinction of any duty at all. Then, as to the more important point in his noble Friend's speech, in which improper motives had been imputed to him. He had differed with his noble and learned Friend (Lord Brougham) upon the question of the quantities to be looked for in a statesman, and he felt it his duty to express that difference of opinion; but he could not admit that anything he had said could be called personal. What he had stated was, that Sir Robert Peel had for the last three years done everything in his power

to retard the progress of such measures as the present, and that he did not think it was of such stuff that the Ministers of this country should be made.

The EARL OF HARDWICKE (who rose with Earl Grey) said he could assure their Lordships that it was with very great regret that he interfered with his noble Friend, feeling that his noble Friend was so much more worthy from his great abilities, his extensive acquaintance with all Parliamentary subjects, as well as being more accustomed to public speaking than himself, of occupying the attention of the House at that late hour. He supposed he must begin his address like almost every other noble Lord who had spoken on the subject by expressing his regret—

“Prologues precede the piece in mournful verse”—

that he was compelled to array himself in opposition to many noble Friends of his with whom he had been in habits of alliance, and between whom and himself there always had existed a good understanding. But he confessed he then found himself divided from them by circumstances over which he had no control. He gave them every possible credit for being influenced by the most honourable motives, as public men, in the course which they were pursuing; and having said so much, he thought he had a right, as a public man, to express his own sentiments on so important a subject as the present—a subject in which the general interest of the country was so deeply concerned; and he only regretted that he should be obliged to ask their Lordships’ attention at such a late hour of the night. He did not believe their Lordships were more interested in the question than the humblest man in the community. Nay, he felt convinced that the lower they descended in the social scale, the more the individual was concerned. He conceived that those who were opposing this measure, were the real protectors of the poor. It was not the poorer class who were urging on the question: it was the rich manufacturers—it was the aristocracy of wealth that was interested in abolishing protection; and in the contest between two classes of aristocracy, it was the poor man that was likely to be the sufferer; and therefore it was that he said that his noble Friends who agreed with him on this question were the real protectors of the poor man. It was the power of wealth that was urging on this measure—it was the power of the steam-

engine, which with its wonderful and varied applications led the manufacturers to believe that if they could lower the price of food and fuel, they could flood the markets of the world. In the most democratic of countries, America, the principles of protection were steadfastly maintained. To one exposition of those principles he should refer. There were publications which represented the views generally entertained by communities. *The Times* newspaper, for instance, might be quoted as an organ always expressing public opinion in this country. Now, he should quote the *American Times*. [The noble Earl then read a quotation describing the protective system as purely democratic in its tendency, as fostering industry, as enabling the poor man to acquire a competency, as designed not for the few, but for the many, and, though productive of common good, as conferring its peculiar blessings upon the lower classes.] To these opinions he fully subscribed; and he believed their Lordships were influenced in the views which they took upon the present question not as one involving their own interests, but by a desire for the common good. If he were to look to his own interests, he should benefit by a measure which for a period lowered the value of property; for then as a great proprietor he should be able to put his hands upon the surrounding small properties. The small proprietor was, he feared, often in debt, and his property mortgaged, thus depending on a small balance; and when that was swept away his property must come into the market. It was the small proprietor, therefore, more than any other, that their Lordships were called on to defend. This country had flourished under the protective system. They saw by the statistics which were on their Lordships’ Table, that the system of protection had advanced the shipping, the commercial, the manufacturing, the agricultural, and in fact all the other great interests of the country. Though it was said the farmers had not made such a progress as other classes in improvement, he would show them by a few facts how the agriculturists of this country had discharged their duty, of providing sufficient food for an increasing population, and giving the poor man cheap bread—cheaper than he ever would have under any system of free trade; that they had succeeded in keeping pace with the wants of an increasing population in a manner which was quite astonishing, at prices which had

diminished. In 1825 the population of England was about 16,000,000, and the average price of corn 60s. a quarter. In 1835 they had increased to 18,000,000, and the price of corn was 56s.; and in 1845, with a population of 20,000,000, the price of corn was 52s. Then, again, the produce of the country under the protective system had increased from 3,900,000 quarters of wheat to 5,800,000. As another proof of the elastic character of the resources of the country under the same system of protection, he would instance the revenue maintaining its equality with the public expenditure notwithstanding the great reduction of taxation. Sir R. Peel, speaking in 1844, said "the elasticity of commerce to meet a decreased revenue, had been produced by the condemned system of the Corn Laws; and the question was whether that could be a radically vicious system under which commerce had been so extraordinarily elastic that it had maintained the revenue, notwithstanding the great diminution of taxation." This being established, he would show that the price in this country of food other than bread had decreased under the present system. He held in his hand a return of the contracts for Greenwich Hospital in 1791-2, and 1841-4-5. The result was most extraordinary. The whole ration in 1792 consisted of flour nine ounces, bread fifteen ounces, and meat four and a half ounces; and the cost then was 6d. per ration. Now the ration consisted of beef or mutton thirteen ounces, bread sixteen ounces, potatoes one pound, cocoa three-quarters of an ounce, and moist sugar three-quarters of an ounce, and the cost of the ration was only 7d. and three-sixteenths. He maintained, therefore, that food had been made cheaper under a system of protection. His noble Friend had alluded last night to the capital invested in agriculture; but in addition to his noble Friend's statement, he would mention there had been an enormous increase in the shipping employed for the use of agriculture, there being in 1845 no less than 679 ships of 219,764 tons, and having 11,434 seamen engaged in the guano trade alone, no small proof of the exertions making to raise food to meet the wants of a growing population. He would also venture to speak of that disputed point, the condition of the labourer. He had taken great pains to acquire accurate information on this point, and he could assure their Lordships that in many re-

spects it was much better than formerly. Many of the aged poor in his own neighbourhood had stated that sixty or seventy years ago they never remembered to have seen wheaten bread—in fact it was impossible to conceive anything more wretched than was the condition of that part of the country; no roads, the country unenclosed, the farmer killing and salting down the meat necessary for his winter supply—no stock of any kind could be kept except during the summer months. Now under the system of protection, what a contrast! That whole district has been drained, enclosed, and brought into cultivation; and in consequence the poor were fully employed and well fed. But the truth was, that with respect to the condition of the labourer, whether agricultural or manufacturing, they must look at the condition of those above him, and see what were their profits, before they could form a right judgment as to the portion of those profits which should belong to the labourer. Their Lordships must know well that there was no description of employment in which profits were so small as in agriculture; and having himself had some experience, he was prepared to say, speaking generally, that from 10s. to 12s. per week was the highest rate of wages that could possibly be afforded out of those profits. Another important question on this subject was whether the rate of wages was regulated by the price of food. This was a question much controverted, and he was satisfied that both the parties who discussed it were right. He was satisfied that with respect to the wages of the manufacturing labourer the price of corn had little to do; but not so with the agricultural labourer. There were three ingredients that formed the value of labour—skill, demand, and price of food. The skilful and ingenious mechanic could get high wages, because he was skilful and ingenious, without reference to the price of food. When manufactures were prosperous, skilful labourers were in great demand; and they were engaged at high wages without reference to the price of food. But agricultural labour required, comparatively speaking, no great skill; all the labourers in this respect were pretty much alike; and during a large portion of the year their labour was of very little profit, under which circumstances it was true that an important ingredient in the calculation of their wages was the price of food. It was evident,

therefore, that, in the agricultural districts, wages would oscillate with the price of food; whilst the manufacturer, whose machinery was perpetually in motion, and who made his profits from the quantity of his produce sold, would be indifferent as to the price of food. He would say, also, that it was a most important thing for the labourer that the price of corn should not fall excessively low, for if it did, his condition must be seriously injured. Another portion of the question was the influence of prices on the rate of mortality. He held in his hand a pamphlet written by a manufacturer of the name of Barker, from which it appeared that, in the manufacturing districts, the annual number of deaths in a population of 1,000,000 was 21,860 when the price of wheat was under 50s. a quarter; 20,618 when the price was between 50s. and 60s.; 20,030 when the price was between 60s. and 70s.; 19,502 when the price was between 70s. and 80s.; 19,873 when the price was between 80s. and 90s.; 19,206 when the price was between 90s. and 100s.; but when the price was above 100s., the rate of mortality began to increase again. It further appeared that the same result was observable in the agricultural districts, although not in precisely the same degree. The cause of this was, to his mind, evident. A low price of corn threw numbers out of employ—their health was injured from their deteriorated condition; a high price produced the same effect from a different cause; he feared it was, that the wages did not rise sufficiently to meet the cost of food. It was clear, therefore, that the middle or moderate price was the best for the health and comfort of the poor. He had now stated quite enough to show the state and condition of this question; and he boldly asserted, without fear of contradiction, that the Empire had been in a most flourishing condition under the Corn Laws, and so continued to be. Then why were they to make a change? And this was a question he had not yet heard answered. It was originally stated that Ireland was in such a condition that it was necessary to do something to supply that country with food; and at first sight he had thought there was a necessity for some alteration. It was not, however, necessary, after all that had transpired, to go into the question whether there was a famine in Ireland; for that plea had been abandoned by the Minister in the other House of Parliament, and in this they had heard little

about it. Sir R. Peel stated in his last speech upon that subject, "that he did not rest his support of that Bill upon the temporary ground of the scarcity in Ireland;" so that that argument in favour of the proposed change might be considered to have been abandoned by Her Majesty's Government. His noble and learned Friend opposite (Lord Brougham) had said that the distress in Ireland was much less than had at one time been apprehended, in consequence of the introduction into that country, under the direction of Her Majesty's Ministers, of a large quantity of maize, giving credit to the Government for having, as he supposed, checked the progress of famine. Now, he (the Earl of Hardwicke) found that only 53,000 quarters of maize had been imported into Ireland since the commencement of the month of January up to the present time; whereas it appeared from a return which he held in his hand, that the following exports of corn and of flour and oatmeal, from Ireland, had taken place during the months of April and May last:—In April 19,540 quarters of wheat, and in May 33,372 quarters; in April, 10,148 quarters of barley, and in May 11,089 quarters; in April, 80,803 quarters of oats, and in May, 93,888 quarters; in April, 89,000 cwt. of flour, and in May, 101,898 cwt.; in April, 50,360 cwt. of oatmeal, and in May, 69,194 cwt.; so that the quantity of maize imported into Ireland, by order of the Government, bore but a very small proportion to the amount of produce which had been sent out of that country, showing more clearly than any words or arguments, that no want of food existed at any late period in that country. His noble and learned Friend opposite (Lord Brougham) had said that his opinions upon the subject of the Corn Laws had never varied.

LORD BROUGHAM said, that what he had stated was, that he had always been opposed to the sliding scale.

THE EARL OF HARDWICKE continued:—He found that in the year 1827 his noble and learned Friend, according to the reports of the debates in the other House, had made a most eloquent speech in favour of the sliding scale. He spoke at such length and so strongly in its favour, with that pleasing excitement which always gave such satisfaction, and with such liveliness of manner, that, according to the report, there was such coughing in the House, and such interruption, that the progress of his noble and learned Friend's speech was

stopped, and he (Lord Brougham) “hoped that the Gentlemen who interrupted him would abstain from further impediments—their efforts would only affect themselves, and bring on colds and coughs to-morrow from unnecessary exhaustion.” He knew the importance of the opinions of his noble and learned Friend; and though he had forgotten, amongst the immense number of speeches he had made, this particular advocacy of the sliding scale, he must be as fully excused as others who did not recollect a speech made at a former time.

LORD BROUGHAM rose to borrow the volume of *Hansard*, saying he was very curious to read the speech, because his noble Friend had only said that he was prevented from making it, and had not read any argument from it.

THE EARL OF HARDWICKE resumed. The noble and learned Lord entered into some calculations respecting the exports of corn to this country from Dantzic. He said that the charges above the price of the corn would be 10*s.*, viz., 5*s.* for freight, 2*s.* for insurance, and 3*s.* for other charges. But that was very inaccurate; a more exact estimate showed that the charges amounted to no more than 6*s.* 4½*d.*

LORD BROUGHAM explained, that that was not his calculation; for, on the contrary, it was the argument used by his opponents. They contended that if the price at Dantzic were 30*s.*, and the charges 10*s.*, certain results would ensue; to that he replied, that they could not tell whether the price at Dantzic would be 30*s.* after the English Corn Laws were repealed.

THE EARL OF HARDWICKE said, that he was merely taking those parts of the noble and learned Lord’s speech which seemed to him to require contradiction. He should now, however, go to another portion of the subject, namely, fluctuation of price, and its effect upon the small farmers. The industrious and honest farmer depended more upon the steadiness of price than upon anything else. He must pay his rents out of his yearly profits; and the moment the price fell below a certain amount, he would be completely destroyed; and he could, from references to documents which he held in his hand, easily show that the existing Corn Law had maintained prices in England more steadily than in any other part of the world similarly circumstanced. He would refer to Philadelphia, as an instance, —a country which did not grow enough of corn for its own consumption, to point out the effects of a free-trade policy in pro-

ducing fluctuations of price. From 1834 to 1840 the fluctuation in that country was 47 per cent.; while in England during the same period it was only 33 per cent.; and the extreme septennial fluctuation in Philadelphia was 270 per cent.; while in England it was only 207 per cent. It had been said, however, that the tenant-farmer had nothing to do with that portion of the question: that the landlords had only to reduce their rents, and that would settle the matter. Upon that subject his noble Friend behind him (Lord Stanley) had said all that was requisite; and he (the Earl of Hardwicke) might add that if the incomes of their Lordships were reduced but one-fourth, the consequences to the country and to the manufacturing interests would be disastrous in the extreme. In a correspondence which had taken place between Mr. Senior and Colonel Torrens, one of the great political economists of the day, he stated that the effect of a reduction of rents would be that, with that reduction in rent, there would be a corresponding reduction in the value of the industry of the labouring man, and a reduction in the price of his labour. In that opinion he (the Earl of Hardwicke) entirely concurred. The most important question that remained for consideration was the absolute necessity of keeping this country independent of foreign countries. That wise policy had been the policy of our ancestors for ages past, and had led to the settlement of the present Royal Family upon the Throne; for it was to render us independent of Popish influence that caused the settlement of the Crown to the exclusion of the Stuarts. Were not all the evils which had befallen this country attributable to either foreign connexion or foreign interference? Our enormous debt had arisen from these causes alone. He would trespass on their Lordships but one moment more for the purpose of calling their attention to their own position. It was perfectly notorious that the present Parliament was assembled under the Government of noble Lords opposite upon the particular question now under discussion; it was the ground on which the Conservative Government came into power. Sir R. Peel, on the Motion of want of confidence, on the 31st of January, 1840, said, “Agriculture has improved since 1834. It is owing to your fostering hand [addressing the Government benches], and the manly and decided tone which you have taken on the Corn Laws. I said previously, and I

now repeat, that I consider liberal protection to domestic agriculture indispensable." Speaking of the principles which would prevail if a new Government came into power, he said, "I can answer for this, that if the principles I profess do not prevail, of that Government I will become no party." This was the language used by Sir R. Peel previous to the dissolution of Parliament, and which language gave him (Lord Hardwicke) confidence in the course Sir R. Peel would pursue; this was the language which caused the great country party to rally round Sir R. Peel and overthrow the Whig Government. In his speech on the opening of the present Session, "I should have wished," he said, speaking of himself, "that another Parliament should have an opportunity of considering this question, but there did occur that during the recess which precluded me from taking that step." He then alluded to the visitation of Providence which had befallen Ireland, the consequences of which it was difficult to foresee. Ireland was the whole question. Sir R. Peel was ready to dissolve had it not been for Ireland. Well, but that question was settled. It was, therefore, their bounden duty to afford the people of this country an opportunity of pronouncing an opinion upon this question by rejecting the Bill.

LORD BROUGHAM rose to explain. He found that the reports of proceedings in Parliament, at the time his noble Friend had referred to, in quoting what he represented as his (Lord Brougham's) opinions, were by no means so accurate and full as the reports of the present day; and anything equal to the nonsense that some of the speakers were made to say he had never read. The noble and learned Lord then quoted portions of speeches made by himself in the House of Commons, in March, 1827, when, instead of expressing his concurrence in the principle of the sliding scale, he declared his approval of the principles of commercial reform which the Government had then recently entered upon, but confined within his own bosom his sentiments upon the subject of free trade; he certainly did not express his concurrence in the sliding scale.

After some discussion as to the convenience of the House sitting on Wednesday, (which was also the anniversary of the Restoration of Charles II., on which day the House is not accustomed to sit,) debate adjourned to Thursday.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Thursday, May 28, 1846.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL—SECOND READING.—THIRD NIGHT.

THE EARL OF DALHOUSIE presented a petition in favour of the Bill from merchants, bankers, and traders of the city of London. It was signed by 24 directors of the Bank of England, 19 bankers, and 217 merchants and traders. As it was a petition of the merchants of London in 1820 which very much led to the adoption of that system of commercial policy that had since proceeded step by step, so he hoped their petition this Session would be an inducement to the House to carry that system into full effect.

LORD ASHBURTON felt sure that a petition could easily be procured from the city as respectably signed against the pending measure, as fraught with great danger to commerce as well as agriculture.

LORD BROUGHAM thought that, if so, the city must have strangely changed its opinions since his noble Friend presented the memorable petition against the Corn Laws in 1815.

LORD MONTEAGLE invited the noble Lord (Lord Ashburton) to procure such a petition as he had spoken of, and let it be compared with this in signatures and in allegations.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND would like to know how many of these merchants had got bonded corn.

LORD BROUGHAM said, that that was a very ingenious observation in the form of a question, but he never heard of such a question being asked when a similar petition was presented in 1820.

LORD ASHBURTON observed, that the petition to which the noble and learned Lord referred was not a petition of the same sort as the present. That was a petition in favour of a general relaxation of the immense trammels and restrictions which at that time pressed upon trade; but the present petition prayed that the whole of the protection, as respected corn, might be swept away, and had no reference to any other matter of commerce. Unquestionably, names of great respectability were attached to the present petition; but he doubted whether the signatures comprised the majority of the most considerable merchants in London.

LORD BROUGHAM was not aware that

corn was excepted from the petition of 1820.

EARL GREY said, that the subject before the House had been both in and out of Parliament—in speeches and in pamphlets—so long and so fully discussed, that their Lordships might be of opinion that no new argument could be now brought forward, and they were anxious, therefore, to bring the debate to a close; and were it not that he had for many years taken a deep interest and an active part in the discussion of the question, he would have stood aloof in this, probably the last, battle to be fought betwixt free trade and monopoly. One of the reasons, however, which influenced him in rising was the feeling that a great impression had been made on their Lordships by the speech which they had listened to on the first night of the debate, from the noble Lord the late Secretary for the Colonies, whose absence, from what he heard of the unfortunate cause of it, he very greatly lamented. He had listened to the speech in question with as much attention and delight as any of their Lordships. His arguments were put with so much skill, and clothed in language of such extreme beauty, that for upwards of three hours he riveted the attention of every noble Lord who listened to him, and made listening to him—very different to what listening to many others was—not a labour but a delight. He (Earl Grey) knew that some of the arguments in that speech had already been answered, especially by the noble and learned Lord who had followed him in debate, and by his noble Friend who now sat behind him. But it seemed to him that there were still portions of that speech to which it was requisite that their Lordships' attention should be particularly called. He was not vain or presumptuous enough to suppose that he was fitted to enter into the lists with his noble Friend; but he had such confidence in the power of truth that he believed that even in his (Earl Grey's) feeble hands the cause which he advocated might be sufficiently recommended to their Lordships, and that he should be able to show to the satisfaction of the House that in some most important points of his noble Friend's speech, his noble Friend was mistaken. Through the whole course of the debate it had struck him very forcibly that noble Lords opposite had avoided an explicit avowal of that which he took to be the main object and aim of the Corn Laws—not of this Corn Law only, but of every

preceding Corn Law. He thought it was clear that the real aim of those laws, and the object really intended by them, was to secure what was called a remunerating price for corn, or, in other words, to raise the price of food for the people by artificially restricting the supply. If, as he ventured to submit to their Lordships it was, this was the real object of all these laws, it was one which required strong arguments to prove its expediency; and unless some very cogent reasons could be advanced for it, they must naturally and instinctively conclude that it was not scarcity and dearth, but plenty and cheapness in the food of the people which was to be desired. But although the proof of the necessity of raising the price of corn lay, as he thought, at the root of the matter, he must say that throughout all the speeches which their Lordships had heard in opposition to this Bill, it must have struck them that the opponents of the measure had to a great extent evaded this point. There had been an attempt made to show that upon other and different grounds protection was necessary; and, in particular, most of the noble Lords who opposed the Bill had told the House that the great object of the Corn Laws was really to secure a certain supply, and to save the Empire from the great danger of depending on foreign nations for a supply of the most necessary article of national subsistence. Without meaning any offence, he hoped he might be permitted to say that it was unfortunately out of his power to regard this as anything more than a colourable argument. Let him ask their Lordships what they would say, supposing similar arguments under similar circumstances were urged by others? Would those noble Lords who now defended the Corn Laws give implicit credit to such arguments? He would suppose, for instance, that the cotton manufacturers of this country, instead of manufacturing for the whole world, manufactured for this country only, and that these cotton goods were higher in price than those produced in other parts of the world. He would suppose, also, that foreign cotton manufactures were virtually excluded by high protecting duties. Now, if the cotton manufacturers of this country were to come to their Lordships' House under such circumstances, and say, "Oh, do not repeal these duties, do not make this country dependent on France and other foreign nations, or in the event of a war the population will be left without shirts and without

gowns," he wanted to know whether their Lordships would feel perfectly convinced that it was their disinterested alarm for the welfare of the consumers of cotton in this country which induced them to clamour for a continuance of high protecting duties? Would their Lordships consider that these representations were made out of a just regard to the interests of the consumer? He must say, therefore, that he was a little incredulous that that which had excited so much enthusiasm at the protectionist meetings, and had attracted such crowds to Willis's Rooms that the noble Dukes on the cross benches had been obliged to divide their forces, was a real apprehension entertained out of regard to the consumer, that at some future time our supplies from abroad might fail, and that, as a consequence of that failure, the prices of food in this country might rise to an extravagant height. He could not help suspecting that it was rather an apprehension of having too much corn now, and too low prices at the present time, than of having at some future time too little corn, and that corn too dear. Taking the latter apprehension, however, to exist *bonâ fide* in the minds of those who opposed the present measure, the groundlessness of the fear had been completely established by his noble and learned Friend (Lord Brougham). His noble and learned Friend's reference to the undoubted fact, that Napoleon, in the height of his power, was not able to prevent the corn which was wanted in this country from coming into it, was conclusive on the subject. If they wanted further proof, he would refer their Lordships to what had been said by his noble Friend the late Secretary for the Colonies. His noble Friend had contended, that it was one of the boldest and most laughable paradoxes ever palmed off for wisdom on the credulity of mankind, to maintain that competition was the cause of certain articles rising in price. He (Earl Grey), on the other hand, maintained that it was such a paradox to assert that security for a certain and cheap supply of corn was not to be found in extending as widely as possible the sources from which supplies could be obtained, and by sweeping away artificial restrictions. Utterly rejecting, then, as he did, the notion that this law was to be maintained, if it was to be maintained, for any other purpose than restricting the supply and enhancing the price of corn, he would ask if this was a fair and legitimate object? What was the effect of so raising the

price of corn? It had been well shown by his noble Friend behind him, that, on the very calculations of those noble Lords who were opposed to the Bill now before the House, in reference to the amount which prices were expected to fall, and to the amount of consumption, that the existing Corn Laws could not be considered as laying a smaller tax on the consumers than 10,000,000*l.* sterling—a tax double the amount of the income tax, double the malt tax—a tax, not for the purposes of the State, for not one farthing of it went into the Exchequer, but a tax for the benefit—not the real, but imaginary benefit—of a class. He said the imaginary interests of a class, because he really believed that the landlords themselves shared greatly in the evils which the existence of a Corn Law produced. Their Lordships had been told, however, that this statement was an unfair representation of the fact; and that, admitting that the price of corn was raised by a Corn Law, and admitting also that the payment of a higher price for food would in itself be a burden to the working classes, still they were not really injured by the protection which was given to agriculture, because the effect of the existing law was to keep up the wages of labour in the same proportion as it raised the price of corn. This was the great argument used by his noble Friend who spoke on Monday night (Lord Stanley). Now, it was clear that in the first instance, at all events, an increase in the price of food was a considerable tax on the working population, a large proportion of whose income was necessarily expended upon it; and, therefore, before they determined to maintain the law on the ground that the labouring classes were compensated for this tax by a corresponding rise in their wages, they ought to be very sure that this was the fact. This point, however, which lay at the root of the matter, was very lightly passed over by his noble Friend; but he argued on the assumption that if the price of corn was permanently low, the competition of labourers would soon bring down wages in the same proportion, and that they would, therefore, be no gainers by the reduction of price. This was a very easy way of disposing of the question, but it was far from satisfactory to him (Earl Grey); and the less so, because his noble Friend made some admissions which, in his opinion, led to a conclusion exactly the reverse of that drawn by the noble Lord. His noble Friend admitted that, year by year, wages

did not vary by any means in proportion with the price of corn; that in abundant years, wages did not fall in the same degree with corn; and that, therefore, in such years the labourer was very well off. But the noble Lord said that, on the other hand, in dear years the rise of wages was not immediately consequent on the rise of corn, and that, in such seasons, therefore, the working man was exposed, at least for a time, to a considerable pressure. The experience, however, they had had within the last few years, was perfectly decisive on the subject. If they compared the state of things in this country during years of plenty and years of scarcity, what was the result? Let them compare the condition of the country in 1833, 1834, and 1835, when wheat was low, with what it was in 1839, 1840, and 1841, when wheat was scarce, and consequently dear. In the first triennial period trade was good, there was a great demand for labour, and wages were very high; but in the last three years trade was depressed, there was no demand for labour, wages consequently fell, and numbers of the working population were unable to obtain employment. The condition of the country at that time was too recent, and made too great an impression, to require him to dwell upon it. There could be no doubt that the difficulties experienced in these bad years could be easily accounted for. When corn rose to the very high price it then attained, every family throughout the kingdom was compelled to expend a much larger portion of its income than it had done previously in the purchase of food. There was, of course, less available income left for other purposes; there was less demand for clothing, for tea, or sugar—articles which were paid for by our manufacturers; the trade of our manufacturers, merchants, and small shopkeepers fell off, and there was a general diminution in their power of affording employment to labour, and a general diminution in the power of production. His noble Friend admitted that this was the effect of high prices for a short period; but what possible reason could there be for believing that if high prices became permanent, this effect would not continue? He (Earl Grey) believed that the permanent effect of high prices, like their temporary effect, would be, to render a smaller proportion of the national income available for general purposes, producing a reduced demand for labour, and a consequent diminution of the rate of

wages; while, on the other hand, the permanent effect of low prices would be, to create a greater demand for labour, to afford ample reward to industry, to enable the population to extend their consumption to other articles besides food, and to render the country flourishing and prosperous. This was the conclusion which he thought they had a right to infer from simple reasoning; but the correctness of that reasoning was borne out by the fact, that when their Lordships looked to other countries, where there was permanent plenty and a low price of food, unless there were some counteracting circumstances, wages were invariably high. A noble Earl who had spoken on the other side had admitted this fact; for he said, that wages were not regulated by the price of food, because, although in America and Australia, where food was cheap, wages were high, yet in Poland, where food was also cheap, wages were low. Poland, however, was not a fair instance to cite, as that country was kept down by misgovernment, and the unhappy social condition of its population; but he would challenge the noble Earl to mention any country in the world, beginning from Canada to Australia, where there was a small population in proportion to the extent of territory, and where food was cheap, and good order and good government prevailed, where wages were not also exceedingly high. He (Earl Grey) further contended that the reason why wages were thus high was simply on account of the abundance of food, and the consequent existence of an extensive field for the profitable employment of labour; for in such countries there was a competition on the part of employers to obtain labour, whereas in fully peopled countries like our own the competition was among the labourers to obtain employment. The effect of laws restricting the introduction of food was to increase the disadvantages under which a fully peopled country necessarily laboured, compared with a new and thinly peopled country; for such laws prevented that natural exchange by which a larger supply of food might be obtained in old and thickly peopled countries. He knew that this argument had been, to a certain degree, met in anticipation by his noble Friend, who had told them that those nations from whom we expected to obtain a supply of corn would not receive our manufactures in return. This fallacy had been so clearly exposed by his noble Friend (the Earl of Clarendon) by an appeal to facts, as well

as by argument, that he (Earl Grey) would not trouble their Lordships on the point. It was, however, clear to his mind, that the Corn Laws inflicted a double disadvantage upon the labouring classes; for, so far from the high price of corn entailed by the Corn Laws being counterbalanced by an increase of their wages, those laws, while they enhanced the price of food, depressed the wages by which that food was to be purchased. If he was right in this opinion, if such was really the effect of the Corn Law upon the condition of the labourer, that one fact ought to be conclusive, without any further argument on this question; and, as a Christian Legislature, if they were once satisfied of that fact, no consideration ought to prevent them from at once sweeping away the existing restrictions. When he looked at the condition to which the labouring classes had been reduced in some parts of the country; when he saw descriptions of the frightful condition of the agricultural labourers in Dorsetshire, Wiltshire, and others of the southern counties; when he was aware that even in those districts where their lot was most favoured, their position was far below what was to be desired—and when he was at the same time satisfied that the effect of the system of protection maintained by the Corn Laws was at once to depress wages and to raise the price of food, it seemed to him scarcely necessary to argue the question further. Taking what he assumed to be the case as true, he warned those noble Lords who had come down to the House with elaborate statements, to show that, under the proposed alteration, enormous quantities of corn at a very low price would be introduced into this country, to beware that they did not create a needless and a serious panic. But if those noble Lords were right, (though he believed them to be entirely wrong,) and if they could prove that the price of corn would fall to the extent they predicted, what was the inference? It was this—that the injustice done to the labourer, by artificially enhancing the price of food by Act of Parliament, was much greater than had been hitherto believed, and that there was the more pressing necessity for a repeal of the present Corn Law. While he stated this, however, he must at the same time say, that he thought it would be a very great evil if any panic should be created on this subject. They knew that, in 1842, those who called themselves the farmers' friends inflicted most serious injury upon those

farmers who were simple enough to rely upon their predictions as to the probable effects of the Tariff. The farmers who were gulled by the prophecies of those individuals as to the fall which was to take place in the price of meat and other articles, and who rushed into the market and sold their stocks at a great sacrifice, very soon found out their mistake; and he believed the country was at this moment suffering in some degree from the effects of the preposterous and absurd panic which was then excited. He hoped no similar panic would be created on this occasion; and he was happy to say that he did not at present see any symptoms of such an event. He was glad to find, from all the information he had received, that land never let or sold on better terms than now, and that the spirit of agricultural improvement was never more actively at work. He believed that the demand for draining-tiles was at this moment particularly active; and so great was the desire to use them, that, when a kiln of draining-tiles was known to be ready, there was quite a competition among the farmers of the neighbourhood to obtain them. He thought that in this the farmers and occupiers of land showed much judgment. He believed that all the calculations which had been made of the price at which corn could be sold in this country, if protection were taken away, were made without proper data. While upon this point, he could not help advertising to a statement made by his noble Friend (Lord Stanley) who spoke on Monday night, and which had been furnished to his noble Friend by a high practical authority. His noble Friend told the House that there were at that moment two cargoes of wheat at Liverpool, which his correspondent had purchased at Dantzic, and which, including freight to this country, had cost only 23s. 6d. a quarter. Now, as this statement seemed to him to be a specimen of those which had been made upon this part of the question, he would read a short extract from a letter which he had received from Liverpool, from a gentleman engaged in the corn trade, with whom he was unacquainted, but who described himself as well knowing the circumstances of the case; it was as follows:—

"It is perfectly true that Lord Stanley's correspondent holds two cargoes of wheat, imported from the Danube, which cost him the price named in his letter. The natural inference is, that wheat can be shipped from the Danube at 14s. per quarter, free on board. Nothing, however, could be more fallacious. The cargoes in question were

ordered in 1844 from Ibrail by a house in Manchester, by whom they were sold at a loss of 10s. per quarter. The original cost was about 33s. per quarter, including freight; but (thanks to the glorious uncertainty of the sliding scale) they were too late to be released at the lowest point of duty in that year, and were sold to the said gentleman at 23s. 6d. Now, to adduce this as any evidence of the shipping prices of wheat is equally absurd and unfair. As well might railway shares, selling at 50 per cent. discount, be adduced to indicate cheapness of construction. As regards Hungary, and other countries contiguous to the Mediterranean, Lord Stanley's ideas of their capabilities of supply are a mere chimera. . . . Under 35s. per quarter, free on board, for middling quantities of wheat, I venture to say we shall get no additional supply of any magnitude from that quarter. Freights thence, too, are nearly double, compared with freights from the Baltic. To return to Lord Stanley's correspondent: I may mention that he actually bought yesterday a cargo of red Wismar wheat, just arrived, at about 45s. per quarter, which, allowing 10s. for duty, charges, and profit, would make it stand 55s. per quarter free. This, at all events, proves he has no great practical fears of the effects of the new measure, however potent his theoretical may be. Lord Stanley wished to make it appear that wheat could be imported from the Danube at 14s. per quarter; the present price is 25s., which may appear low enough; but it is wheat of the most inferior description, mixed with rye and black seeds, and not within 15s. per quarter of the value of good Dantzic wheat; besides which, it often arrives so heated as to be unfit for bread."

It appeared, therefore, that taking into consideration the risk of heating, and the quality of the corn, wheat could not be brought into this country and sold at a lower price than that which British wheat now bore in the market. He thought that the result of former predictions of the same kind ought to teach those who were interested in the land how little reliance ought to be placed in such predictions. He would take, for instance, the case of wool. His noble Friend had said that wool was a strong case in point, and that as the price of that article was very much relied on by the free traders, he would show how the price had been affected by the reduction of the duty. His noble Friend then took the prices of wool in the years immediately preceding the removal of the duty, and the prices of wool in the years immediately subsequent, and endeavoured in this way to show what had been the effect of the repeal of the duty. But what were the real facts of the case? The duty on wool was reduced just at the time of the panic in 1825. After that time the trade and commerce of the country declined considerably, and the price of wool went down like the price of other articles. For some years the

price remained low; and he remembered that in 1828 there was a Committee of that House moved for to consider this subject by his noble Friend the noble Duke (the Duke of Richmond) who sat on the cross benches. A great number of farmers were brought before that Committee to show that wool was then at a ruinously low price. These parties proved, with great minuteness and detail, what advantages the foreign producer of wool had over the home grower; and they stated that the low prices which had already been experienced were nothing to what was coming, and that when there was free trade in wool, prices would fall to a ruinous extent. That bales upon bales of foreign wool would inevitably be introduced into the markets of this country at so low a price as to preclude the competition of the British manufacturer. It was said that wool was of infinitely less bulk than corn, and that it could, therefore, be the more readily and cheaply conveyed from great distances. Parliament was wise enough not to listen to those apprehensions; and what was the result of that wisdom? The result was, that in one or two years after the alteration was carried into effect, wool recovered, the price rose, the manufacture improved; and from that moment to the present wool was one of the most remunerating articles of agricultural production. The noble Duke (the Duke of Richmond), he perceived, shook his head at that statement; but he would remind the noble Duke that, although a good deal of wool was produced in Sussex, yet there was also a great deal of wool produced in Northumberland, so that he (Earl Grey) had an excellent opportunity of becoming acquainted with the facts of this case; and he could state that from 1828 up to this time wool had maintained a remunerating price, and was higher than it had been before the removal of the duty. If, then, the predictions as to the loss which was to result from a free competition in the case of wool, had not turned out to be true, were they not justified in supposing that the predictions as regarded the probable effects of the proposed change in the Corn Laws would be equally fallacious? When the Tariff was under consideration, the greatest possible apprehensions were entertained by some as to the effect which the permission to introduce foreign cattle was calculated to produce upon the price of corn. It was stated, that if stock were allowed to come in from foreign countries

free from duty, the effect of such an alteration would be virtually to repeal the Corn Laws, for the same agricultural produce which could be produced cheaply in foreign countries could be sent into this country in the more portable shape of fat sheep and fat oxen. That argument would be very forcible and well founded if corn could in reality be produced so cheaply in foreign countries as those who relied on the argument presumed. If such were the case, cheap agricultural produce could indeed be introduced in the more portable shape of fat sheep and oxen. They all knew that the apprehension as to the effect of the reduction of duty on stock, as regarded agricultural produce, was quite fallacious, and had now altogether passed away. His noble Friend (Lord Stanley), in his speech on Monday night, dwelt very forcibly upon the argument which had been used by some, that the present high price of cattle was owing to the Tariff; and he (Earl Grey) must remark that notwithstanding the fears which were entertained, four years' experience of the Tariff had altogether disproved the assertion that the introduction of foreign cattle would have the effect of lowering the price of cattle the produce of our own country. If it were capable of producing any such tendency, it might have produced it at the end of four years at least to some extent; and yet within the last year the supply of cattle from abroad was not sufficient to check the tendency to a rise in price which prevailed in our own markets; whilst the few thousand head of cattle exported from Germany had produced a sensible effect upon the markets of that country, so that in many of the German towns the price of fat stock was within a small degree as high as in this country. Similar apprehensions had been indulged in with respect to the reduction of the duty upon flax; and, in fact, upon all the important articles of agricultural produce which were included in the Tariff. But although flax was more valuable in proportion to its bulk than corn, yet subsequent experience had proved that the British growers of flax had no just cause of fear from foreign competition. His noble Friend (Lord Stanley) had asked those who were in favour of the removal of restriction on the importation of corn, what advantage would come of it if, as they stated, it would not considerably reduce the price of bread? His noble Friend thought on that occasion that he had reduced the advocates of free trade in

corn to a dilemma from which they could not escape. It seemed rather a probable argument in the beginning; but if they looked closely to it, what became of it? It was quite fallacious. For his part, he (Earl Grey) did not assert that there would be a great fall in the price of corn, and he was one of the advocates for the removal of restriction; but he did not believe we should see the weekly average of wheat down to 36s. per quarter, as they all had witnessed in the last week of December, 1835, nor did he think it would reach so high a price as 81s. 6d., which corn had reached, as their Lordships would recollect, in the week ending the 11th of January, 1839. But this he expected, that whilst neither that high price nor that low price would be the natural result of the alteration in the law, an average price would be produced by it, but not greatly lower than the average of the last twelve years, and that the price of corn would invariably fluctuate within narrower limits than it did under the present system. The fact of its fluctuating less would be in itself a most important advantage; for it would be admitted on all hands that great benefit would arise from a more steady price. One of the greatest advantages which a civilized country could possess over barbarous countries was its power of preventing those great variations in supply which barbarous countries were apt to suffer from; the latter having at one time a superabundant supply of the necessaries of life, and suffering the utmost distress at another period from a deficient supply of food. Civilized countries, by the natural operations of commerce, enjoyed very great advantages as regarded the steadiness of supply. By those natural operations of commerce, mercantile men, for their own interest, would buy corn in cheap years for the purpose of selling it in dear years; and according to this beautiful system, if it were not interfered with by law, the prices would be to a great extent regulated, the alternations would be checked, and the suffering which must result from an insufficient supply would be removed without injury to any class. The wholesome operation of this system we had prevented by our own interference, by the operation of an artificial law. It appeared from evidence before the Agricultural Committee of 1836, that at a former period, when a different state of the law rendered dealing in corn less hazardous than it was at present, there was usually in this country a stock on

hand of six months' consumption; but such had been the effect of the law of 1815 in rendering the corn trade hazardous, that the usual stock on hand now, at the same period of the year, was a fortnight's consumption. What had caused that? It was caused by a law which rendered the trade in corn a sort of gambling transaction. His noble Friend had stated that some of the agricultural distress which was complained of under the operation of a system of protection, was to be referred to abundant crops in particular years, and the consequent effect upon prices. Why was it that farmers had exerted themselves to such an extent as to exceed the demand that would be profitable? It was because high prices had been artificially stimulated, and excess of consumption thus became a cause of agricultural distress. So long as the country depended on its own supply, there must be a chance of agricultural distress; but if the supply were more regular—if a steady trade were established in corn, then, in cheap years, the freight of corn from foreign ports would be much higher in comparison to the price of corn than it would in dearer years; and, therefore, there being less inducement to export corn from foreign ports in those years, there would be the greater inducement in the home market to take our home produce instead of foreign corn, so that under such a system the farmer would be compensated for the fall in price by the greater sale of corn than usual; for he (Earl Grey) would not go the length of saying that corn would not be cheap in years of abundance, even after this measure was carried. Another advantage, and one of, in fact, incalculable importance, would be, that there would be an immense increase in the consumption of corn on the part of the people of this country; for no one would, he was sure, deny that a portion of our population consume at present much less corn than it was desirable that they should consume. Every one would admit that the labourers of Wiltshire and Dorsetshire, who at present consume more potatoes and less bread than it was desirable they should consume, would be benefited by being enabled to consume a greater quantity of food than they consumed under the existing law. He knew that one Gentleman, who advocated the Corn Laws, had stated that millions "rejoiced in potatoes;" but he (Earl Grey) was of opinion, notwithstanding that statement, that those millions would rejoice far more in a food consisting more of bread,

and less of inferior articles of consumption than that which they can under existing circumstances obtain. He had described some of the advantages which were to be expected from a free trade in corn. A steady trade, which it was calculated to produce, would secure constant employment to the manufacturer; and those engaged in manufactures would thus become greater consumers of corn and cattle than they were at present. And what would be the effect of that increased consumption of articles of agricultural produce? The effect would be, that an impulse would be given to the farmers to produce more cattle than they did now; and he need not tell their Lordships that the foundation of every attempt to improve agriculture was to enable the farmer to keep a larger amount of stock, and that if the farmer had encouragement to keep more stock, he could produce corn cheaper. The direct effect, therefore, of this increased demand would be to cause agricultural improvement; and he believed that agriculture—which might now be regarded as almost in its infancy—would, under these improved and favourable circumstances, advance with a rapidity of which they had now but little notion. This was one of the advantages which he anticipated from the proposed alteration in the law; and it was an advantage which, he was convinced, could be obtained without any sweeping away of tenantry, such as had been described by the noble Duke (the Duke of Richmond) on Monday. He (Earl Grey) should be as sorry as the noble Duke to witness any such sweeping change in the tenantry of the country as the noble Duke anticipated from this measure, if carried into effect; but he felt that no such change would be required, for the farmers were disposed to improve the cultivation, and, as his noble Friend had remarked, the effect of foreign competition could only be felt by degrees. The cultivation could, therefore, be improved and extended to meet that foreign competition. His noble Friend had said that some time would elapse before the foreign competition could come into effect; but he (Earl Grey) thought it rather an advantage that the progress of the competition should be gradual, and that the increased cultivation abroad for this market should be accompanied by an increased cultivation at home—a cultivation which would have all the benefit of the skill and energy of our farmers. Amongst the causes which would operate

to improve our agriculture, he would mention a change in the law to facilitate the conveyance of landed property, as one that was calculated to do a great amount of good if carried into effect; for under it capital, for the purpose of improving land, could be raised as readily upon land as upon a bale of cotton, or a cargo of wine. Under these circumstances, he was of opinion that the removal of protection would afford the strongest possible encouragement to improved farming and increased production; and their Lordships were all aware, from their acquaintance with the subject of the cultivation of land, that improved farming implied more employment to labour—that by higher farming the employment of more hands on the land, and their employment more continuously, were necessarily implied. Part of the evidence before a Committee moved for by a noble Friend of his, was to the effect that the farmers in the south of England were obliged, in order to keep down the poor rates, to employ more hands on their land than under other circumstances they would be inclined to do; but he (Lord Grey) would undertake to say, that there was no farm in England on which every man now employed—ay, and more than were now employed—might not be employed with profit and advantage, with a better demand for agricultural produce. [A Noble LORD: This increased employment would require increased capital.] All that was required in order to make capital flow towards the improvement of the land was to remove the uncertainty caused by the present system of protection. It appeared to him that any one who soberly and deliberately considered the subject, would see that the effect of the measure now before them would not be to throw land in this country out of cultivation. He was so far from supposing the effect of the measure would be to throw land out of cultivation, that he thought they might date a new progress in the cultivation of land from the removal of protection. Another anticipation which had been indulged in as regarded the probable effects of the measure was a fall of rent, and that too was an anticipation which he did not expect to see realized. What was it, he would ask, to which they owed the value of landed property in this country? There was infinitely better land than 90 out of every 100 portions of this country in the prairies and wilds of America, which might be bought for 2*s.* 6*d.* an acre; and what

was it which made our land, that was so much less fertile, so much superior in value to that land in America? It was the existence in this country of a large, an industrious, and a rich population. That and that only it was which gave value to the landed property in this country; and it was only consistent with common reason to suppose that any thing which went to increase the national wealth, and develop the national industry, and increase the prosperity of the realm, would also increase the value of landed property. His noble Friend (Lord Stanley), in his speech on Monday night, adduced the case of Ireland, which being an exporting instead of an importing country, would necessarily suffer a great deal from the proposed measure. So far from this, he (Earl Grey) could show their Lordships that no part of the United Kingdom would gain so largely from the passing of this law as the sister kingdom; but he had already gone so largely into the question, that he would not enter upon the subject of its probable effect upon Ireland at that stage of the Bill. He would now direct the attention of their Lordships to another point, which had been dwelt upon very forcibly by his noble Friend on Thursday night. The noble Lord produced a great impression on the House by describing the effect which this measure would be likely to create upon the condition of our Colonies and upon our interests as connected with the maintenance of our colonial possessions. That was a subject of very great importance; and he (Earl Grey) was so impressed with the high value which ought to be laid on the preservation of our colonial empire, that he would admit that if this law would shake the security of that empire, or its connexion with the mother country, it would deserve the gravest consideration before that House should assent to it. He, however, entertained unhesitatingly the conviction that, so far from being a disadvantage to the Colonies—so far from having a tendency to weaken the ties which unite them to us, the adoption, in the largest sense, and in the most complete manner, of the principles of commercial freedom, was the policy, of all others, which was best calculated to strengthen those ties. His noble Friend had asked, if the colonists were told that they were no more to the country than Frenchmen or Dutchmen, what inducement they would have to wish to be united with this country? To that he (Earl Grey) would answer, that his noble Friend should recollect

that, by this measure, it was not proposed to apply the principle of the removal of restriction to the Colonies exclusively, but it was intended to apply to them a principle which we proposed to apply to ourselves. Would any one say that Cumberland and Yorkshire would be treated badly by this measure, because we did not leave them a protecting duty? If our own counties, then, were to be treated in the same manner by this Bill as the Colonies, then the Colonies had no reason to complain. He could understand how some persons in the old country, where there was a great competition for employment, could be induced to take a short-sighted view of the subject, and thus he could perceive how it was that many persons had been induced to form the opinion that protection was an advantage, and that it was not wise to let in foreign goods to compete with our home market; but with respect to the Colonies there was no such difficulty as that competition for employment. On the contrary, in every one of our own Colonies, the great difficulty was to find sufficient labour to develop fully its natural resources; and if the effect of the proposed system should be to divert labour in the Colonies to its natural and most productive channels, instead of to artificial and unproductive channels, there could be no doubt that it would be an advantage to them. Could any one doubt that Canada was poorer now than she would have been if there never had been a protective duty in favour of her timber? If, instead of letting into our markets bad timber, when we could have had good, we had never adopted that system, Canada would be better off; and the same principle would apply to all our Colonies. The Colonies had received no advantage from protecting duties, whilst in many cases those duties had been directly injurious to them. The West Indies had suffered from not having been allowed to get the various supplies they required in the cheapest market, or to send their supplies in the cheapest form to this country. They gained nothing by protection; and as regarded the effect of commercial dependence in strengthening the ties between the Colonies and this country, he would put it to their Lordships whether the system of commercial dependence had in reality strengthened the ties between the Colonies and the mother country. Did they not all know that jealousy, arising from that commercial dependence, had produced that American war which ended

in the loss of those extensive Colonies to the Crown of this country? He need not point out how infinitely for the welfare both of the United States and ourselves it would have been that that fatal dispute had not arisen; he did not say that in their present state of importance those States would have been kept in dependence to the British Crown; but they might have parted from us in a different manner, and without leaving any feeling of jealousy towards the mother country, if it had not been for that commercial dependence. He was rather surprised, he must own, that his noble Friend, in the course of his speech, should have ventured to touch on the Colonies for an illustration; for he thought that the principle with respect to trade which he had adopted towards the Colonies was not, to say the least of it, very fortunate. Under that policy the corn of Canada was allowed to come into this country at a nominal duty, whilst that advantage was not given to Australia or to any other Colony. That advantage had been given in Canada almost avowedly because it had been recently in a state of rebellion; but it was refused to those which had been always obedient and loyal; and he (Earl Grey) thought that such a course of policy was calculated to excite a spirit of disaffection. His noble Friend asked, if we were to have no advantage in the markets of the Colonies, of what use were they to us? they would not be worth the expense of keeping up military and other establishments for their protection. He would be permitted to say that such a mode of argument was rather defective. It was those who defended protection who were to prove that it was good; but how did they prove it? They said that if we did not keep up protection we would lose the Colonies; and then they said we kept the Colonies by a protective duty; and they then turned round and said, if we did not keep up protection, of what use were the Colonies? That was a specimen of what was called arguing in a circle. For his part he believed that the connexion between the Colonies and the mother country was a mutual advantage, requiring no such support to maintain it. In our colonial empire we possessed friends and allies in every quarter of the globe—we had thus a large population in various parts of the world, possessing great natural resources, united heart and soul with us, ready to take part with us in all our conflicts, and

to support us in all hostilities against a common enemy, and thus we maintained in each possession a garrison of the cheapest kind, whilst they enjoyed the inestimable advantages of being an integral part of the most powerful, and most enlightened, and most civilized nation upon the face of the earth. They gloried—and he knew that they felt it as a glory—in calling themselves British subjects, and in having their interests and rights protected by the power of this country, which was ready at any moment to be called forth to maintain their interests when it was required. That was a substantial advantage of the greatest service to the Colonies. He believed they were fully aware of it; and he believed that if they pursued a liberal policy in other respects towards the Colonies, by extending to them the dearest right of Englishmen, the privilege of self-government, and not needlessly interfering in their domestic concerns—that if they adopted a sound policy, politically as well as commercially, they would bind them to us with chains which no power on earth could break; and the connexion between them and the Parent State would continue until they far exceeded ourselves in population. His noble Friend had next proceeded to say how unjustly this measure would operate with regard to Canada, and had told their Lordships that this country had encouraged Canada to expend large sums of money in the improvement of their navigation, and that we had encouraged Canada to impose a duty on wheat from the United States. He said that this had been done on the faith of the Corn Law; and he asked would it not be unjust to the Canadians to alter that law on the faith of which they had acted? His noble Friend described the route for commerce by Canada, and through the United States; and after detailing the effects which he anticipated from this measure, he asked what chance would the Canadians have of competing with the United States if this measure were carried? The noble Lord continued: “Now I want to know what are the feelings of the Canadians themselves upon the subject, for surely that is an important point.” (“Hear, hear!”) My noble Friend says “Hear, hear!” Now I hold in my hand a newspaper containing a report of the debates in the Canadian Assembly, which I will presently read. Her Majesty’s Government, when they determined on repealing the existing Corn Laws, addressed

a communication to the Canadian Legislature, saying that they were at liberty to repeal the duty of 3s. a quarter on American wheat, which at our instigation they had imposed. Accordingly, a measure for the repeal of that duty was submitted to the Canadian Senate, on which occasion it happened that a Motion for reporting progress was carried, and that was assumed to be a declaration on the part of the Canadian House of Assembly, that they were altogether hostile to the measures of the Government. What, however, was the fact? It seems that that Amendment was carried, almost under a misapprehension, from the parties not exactly understanding the effect of the vote; for a few days afterwards, when the consideration of the subject was resumed, and a vote was to be taken, the result was very different, for a measure was agreed to for repealing the duty on American corn. He had read the speeches on the subject, and instead of finding them characterized by a tone of despondency—instead of crying out against the injustice of this country—instead of lamenting the ruin to which they were to be liable, the utter destruction of their great public works, and of their commercial interests—he was happy to say that, by the majority of that Assembly, language far more manly and more creditable was held. They said, “As England will no longer give us protection, let us see if we cannot do without it; and as the first step, let us repeal this duty on American corn. We can grow corn cheaper than America.” One Gentleman says, that he has been over to Buffalo, and that he finds corn there always 3d. or 6d. per bushel dearer than he can afford to give in Upper Canada. Another said, “Our public works were never in a more promising state, and when they are completed we shall enter with great advantage into competition with America. The locks upon the Erie canal are much more numerous and more expensive in working than those upon the St. Lawrence. We can then not only carry our own corn, but the corn of the Western States through the St. Lawrence, cheaper than the Americans can carry it by the Erie canal.” When they came to divide upon the question, he found those who were in favour of repealing the duty, who had no fear in the success of Canadian energy and Canadian enterprise, in opposition to America, were in a majority of 45 to 27. The resolutions were carried by that majority, and the Canadian

Assembly determined on admitting American corn for passage through their country to England duty free. But his noble Friend said something more. His noble Friend said that this was treatment so unjust to the Canadians, that he thought it was calculated to shake their feeling of loyalty to the British Crown. He confessed he heard that language with great alarm and regret; because he thought he prophesied a diminution in the strength of those ties which now united the people of Canada to this country, in such a manner as almost to imply that they would be justified in disregarding our claims upon their loyalty. But, in the same week in which the Canadian House of Assembly had been discussing the effect which the change of our commercial policy would produce, a Militia Bill was brought under their consideration, and with the permission of the House he would read a passage from a Canadian newspaper, containing a summary of what passed on that occasion:—

“ Dr. Taché made an admirable speech—temperate, argumentative, and well-timed. No appeal was made to party feeling, no attempt to enlist sectional prejudice. It was a speech which will raise the character of the hon. Gentleman immeasurably in the opinion of all who heard him. It would be well for Canada if such addresses were more frequent—if measures of such importance were always taken up in the calm, deliberate manner that this has been, and with a disposition on both sides of the House in endeavouring to make a perfect measure. After stating the objections which he had to certain clauses, Dr. Taché concluded by suggesting that the Bill should be referred to a Special Committee.—Mr. Lafontaine followed, and treated the question in the same admirable spirit: he agreed in the suggestion of Dr. Taché, and hoped it would be complied with; he assured the Attorney General that every aid which could be given by that side of the House would be freely afforded to perfect a measure of such importance to the country.—Mr. Draper, after some remarks from other Members, moved to refer the Bill to a Select Committee, which was carried unanimously.—Thus the Bill, which has been looked upon as one over which the great battle of the Session was to be fought, has virtually passed through the House without an angry word. We congratulate the country on the event of last evening: the Members on the Opposition benches acted in a manner which did them honour, and entitles them to the thanks of the country. We feel convinced that the conduct of the French-Canadian Members has done very much to create a better feeling between them and their fellow colonists of British origin. No man who saw the demonstration of last evening could feel a doubt, that in case of need, they would be found shoulder to shoulder with the Anglo-Saxon in defence of our territory and the honour of the British Crown.”

These are the effects of our commercial policy in weakening the ties between the

two countries. The result, then, my Lords, of these considerations is in my mind sufficient to prove that the passing of the Bill now before your Lordships is imperatively required in justice to the great mass of the people of this country; whilst it also proves that by adopting that course we run no risk of inflicting the slightest injury on any interest, either colonial or domestic. He believed that none of the great interests of this Empire would be exposed to the slightest risk by passing this Bill; but, on the other hand, he believed that by rejecting it they would run serious hazards and incur great responsibilities. He would remind the noble Duke (the Duke of Richmond) that at an early part of the evening, when the petition of the Merchants of the City of London was presented by the noble Earl, he asked a very significant question, “ How many of the signers of that petition are holders of bonded corn ? ” Did he not think that they all knew the innuendo conveyed by that question ? But he would ask whether, if they rejected this Bill, his noble Friends’ example would not lead those who thought themselves injured by this Bill to ask how many of their Lordships were owners of land ? He did not believe that, consciously, any of their Lordships were actuated by personal motives ; but after what had been said by his noble Friend, he believed that when they imputed to others interested motives, interested motives would in their turn be imputed to them. And he believed, though they were not themselves conscious of it, yet that unconsciously they were influenced in their decisions by the effect which they believed this Bill would have on the interests of the owners of land : it was not in human nature that it should be otherwise. And, though he admitted that the noble Duke was justified in putting the question which he did, yet he asked what effect would be produced on the public mind if their Lordships—an assembly of landowners—rejected this Bill, more especially after the manner in which it had come up to them from the Lower House ? He trusted before their Lordships took a course which seemed to him so full of danger, that they would reflect a little on what the practical consequences of this measure would be. As men of judgment and experience, he was sure they would not act with the view of gratifying mere passion of temper ; that they would not inquire into the changes of the Minister who had introduced it ; but that they would consider, before rejecting this Bill,

what practical advantages to themselves and to the nation would result from their adopting such a course. What were those supposed advantages? Did they believe that they could maintain permanently the existing Corn Law? Looking at the events of the last few years, he asked would any one of the three noble Dukes, now on the cross benches, say they believed it possible that by any combination of circumstances the existing Corn Law could be much longer maintained? ["Hear, hear!"] He thought his noble Friends stood nearly alone in that opinion. [Several noble Lords: No, no.] He could only say that the noble Earl who spoke on Tuesday with great animation, and at great length on this subject, stated that he, for one, did not look to the permanent defeat of the proposed measure; he expected that some alteration of the Corn Laws would be carried; all he looked for was what he called giving the country "breathing time." If by giving the country "breathing time," it was meant that they should allow an interval for reflection, that an appeal should be made to the country, he confessed that that seemed to him one of the greatest misfortunes that could happen. A dissolution of Parliament at this exciting time—town arrayed against county—the angry passions that would be excited—the suspension of industry and trade—the absolute paralyzation of all the enterprise of the country that must exist during that mighty contest—were all these, the inevitable consequence of a dissolution, to be desired, if, after all, the result was still to be the passing of this Bill? The result, however, would not be precisely the same; for he believed the consequence would be the passing of a Bill for the immediate and entire repeal of all duties. But if they were not to look to maintaining permanently the existing Corn Law, he would ask the noble Lords whether they did really believe that by throwing out this Bill they could obtain anything of a compromise, on the principle of a fixed duty for example, which had been thought of? His noble Friend the other evening threw out many hints in order to catch the parties who were in favour of that measure, and his noble Friend said it would be inconsistent for those who had before supported a fixed duty to vote for the present Bill. He disagreed with his noble Friend; he had himself supported a fixed duty. When the measure of 1842 was introduced, he thought that a fixed duty would, on the

whole, be the best settlement of the question that could then be proposed, and he then urged its adoption; but not with a view to protection, for he had uniformly, and on every occasion, objected to the whole principle of what is called protection. At that time, however, he thought that a moderate fixed duty was advisable for one reason, because he thought it would produce little perceptible effect on the price of corn, whilst it would afford a considerable revenue; but chiefly he thought it advisable because he regarded it as a reasonable compromise, because he believed that it would give them, some years sooner than they could hope to obtain it by other means, the practical advantages which he anticipated from free trade, and that it would avert the great and most injurious struggle which he foresaw. But even at that time, when he was advocating a moderate fixed duty, he took the liberty of warning those Gentlemen who were then supporting the Government, that they were supporting a measure which must necessarily lead at no very distant day to entire free trade. He told them that if they desired a fixed duty, the days and hours when a fixed duty could be accepted were rapidly passing away—that they must close with the offer as it was made, for that if that measure were not quickly conceded, such a settlement would in his opinion be impracticable. That anticipation was correct. If they had adopted a moderate fixed duty in 1842, it would have been accepted by the country; but he was no less firmly persuaded that if Parliament were to pass such a measure now, the country would not be satisfied; agitation would still continue; and, as one deeply interested in land, (for he could not attempt to conceal his personal interest in this question,) there was nothing which he should so much deprecate as the Legislature now sanctioning a measure for a fixed duty. The consequence would be a continuation for some years longer of the agitation which had of late been going on, and which, he believed, of all things was most deeply detrimental to the landed interest. But even if such a measure were likely to be accepted by the country, let him ask how was such to pass through Parliament? By what party—by what set of men—could a measure for a fixed duty now be carried? Certainly not by the existing Government, for they knew that they had pledged themselves within the last week or two to consent to nothing of the kind. The whole

tone of their declaration had been that a fixed duty was perfectly out of the question—that protection might be right, but that the alternative was between protection, as it then existed, and free trade—that to make corn the subject of more taxation, to impose a duty on food for mere purposes of revenue, was a proposition to which they would never assent. Then the great party who were opposed to them, will they do it? His noble Friend, who with such distinguished ability conducted that party in the other House of Parliament, had publicly declared that in December last he was prepared to form a Government on the principle of the immediate and complete repeal of the Corn Laws. Could he, then, and those connected with him, take up a measure, after that declaration, which had been rejected by the present Government as not going sufficiently far? All who knew his noble Friend knew that he was the last man in the world to listen to such a suggestion. To expect him to come forward and propose a measure for a fixed duty now, was altogether irrational and improbable. Then there was a third party—as they called themselves, at least; there was his noble Friend who made so eloquent a speech on Monday night, and the noble Duke on the cross bench—were they prepared to form a Government and to propose that measure? He should think, after the very severe language which they had held in the course of the last few weeks on the subject of inconsistency, deserting pledges, eating words, and so on, that they would be the last persons so to come forward; and but last year the most prominent Members of that party declared that they never would consent to it—that even free trade itself was a less abomination in their eyes. Then there was nobody to propose it; and he really thought that all idea of a fixed duty might at once be consigned to oblivion. He thought that, if adopted at the proper time, and at the proper season, it would not have been a bad settlement of the question; but that time and that season having passed, they must decide between maintaining the law as it now stood, or the more complete measure of reform which was opposed to it. His noble Friend (Lord Stanley) on Monday night warned them against passing this measure, lest they should be obliged to yield one concession after another; and he referred to ulterior measures which a speaker had alluded to at a League meeting. [Lord KINNAIRD: It was not a meet-

ing of the League.] He was reminded that it was not a meeting of the League; whether it was or not was quite immaterial. He believed no man would attempt to defend all the speeches which had been made by all the Members of the Anti-Corn-Law League; for his own part, he should certainly be very sorry to do so. He quite agreed that the speech in question was a most absurd speech, and that the speaker referred to most vicious measures—to measures which he trusted would never receive the sanction of Parliament. He was also prepared to admit that the existence of the Anti-Corn-Law League was a very great evil. He said it was a great evil; but let him not be misunderstood. They must not suppose that he meant to throw any blame on those individuals who were at the head of that body; for he had no hesitation in saying, however the declaration might be received in that House, that, in his opinion, this country owed a debt of gratitude to the leaders of that body, and more especially to Mr. Cobden. He said that to him, to his genius, and to his indefatigable energy and perseverance—not to Sir R. Peel, not to that party in Parliament with which he had the honour of being connected, but to his hon. Friend, Mr. Cobden—were they indebted for the achievement of what he believed to be one of the most important measures with reference to the future welfare of the British people which ever received the sanction of Parliament. To him the country should feel deeply indebted. He had achieved this triumph by means altogether unexceptionable. There had been no appeal to physical force, no threatening displays of great multitudes of persons collected together. [A noble LORD: Because he could not get them.] The noble Lord said, “because he could not get them.” He attributed it, however, to a different cause. He believed it was because Mr. Cobden thought, and thought justly, that the proper way of acting on the opinion of Parliament was through the opinion of the nation. All his efforts had been addressed towards converting the opinion of the nation—towards teaching both farmers and manufacturers what the real interests of the community upon this subject were; and, considering the time in which this great change of opinion had been attempted, he must say, that his success appeared to him almost miraculous. But still he said that the existence of the Anti-Corn-Law League was an evil; and he believed, if they were to ask Mr. Cobden

himself, he would tell them that he was of the same opinion. It was an evil, because such a body never could exist unless it was created by a strong feeling amongst a large proportion of the people, that wrong and injury were being inflicted on them. It was, he believed, only a monster grievance which could have created such a formidable organization as the Anti-Corn-Law League; but he agreed with his noble Friend (Lord Stanley), that, once created, the redress of the grievance which created this body would not destroy in all quarters the desire to maintain that organization. The noble Lord, with the happy language peculiar to himself, said that the eup of political power was too sweet, when once tasted, to be readily relinquished. That was perfectly true; and no doubt there would be a great anxiety amongst many members of that body to keep up their formidable organization, and to apply their powers to the carrying of other objects. It was consistent with all past experience that such should be the case. But what, let him ask, was the inference their Lordships ought to draw from that consideration? Was it that they should keep up the grievance which had created that formidable power until the present sense of wrong, aggravated by disappointment, forced concession from them? The inference which he drew, on the contrary, was, that their Lordships ought, with the least possible delay, to repeal this law; and he might observe, in passing, that one great objection which he entertained to a portion of this Bill, was on account of the delay in adopting it; and if, in accordance with the forms of Parliament, that House had the power of amending Bills of this nature, he should certainly have liked to have altered the three years' provision; for that "rag of protection," as it was aptly termed the other evening, was only calculated to afford an excuse for those who wished to keep up the Anti-Corn-Law League—a power which, if kept up, it was not impossible they might see directed to other and more dangerous purposes. Would not the grievance be aggravated a thousand fold when the hope of redress had been disappointed; and did they not think that the power of this body would be largely increased if, after the circumstances which had occurred, all redress were refused? His noble Friend (Lord Stanley), in the course of his speech on Monday, went on to say, that if they consented to pass this measure, their Lordships must be content in future to be regarded as a subordinate

part of the Constitution—as the registers of the edicts of the House of Commons. But his noble Friend went on in the same breath to describe, in most beautiful and glowing language, the real purpose of this House.

"My Lords," he said, "if I know anything of the constitution or value of this House, it is that it should interpose a wholesome and salutary obstacle to rash and inconsiderate legislation. It is to protect the people against the consequences of their own imprudence. It is not, my Lords, it never has been, and never should be, to resist the expression of continued and deliberately formed public opinion—to that your Lordships have always, and I trust always will, bow; but it is yours to check the progress of hasty and irreparable legislation."

In those words his noble Friend, with his usual happiness of expression, detailed most accurately their Lordships' proper place in the Constitution of the country. As he told them, it was their office to check the progress of hasty and irreparable legislation, but not to oppose themselves to continued and deliberately formed public opinion. It was therefore of the deepest importance that their Lordships should discriminate and distinguish accurately when the desire of the country for a change in the law did proceed from a hasty and inconsiderate passion for alteration, and when it rested on a continued and deliberately formed opinion. It was of the deepest importance that they should accurately distinguish between these two cases, because if they made a mistake, if under the notion that they were opposing hasty legislation, their Lordships did set themselves against deliberately formed and rational public opinion, it was perfectly clear they must give way, and that by so giving way they seriously shook and impaired their proper authority and power in those cases in which they really might be exercised with advantage to the country and to the Constitution. In this case, then, it was their Lordships' duty to endeavour to determine whether the desire of the people, as represented by the votes of the House of Commons, was founded on a deliberately formed opinion, or whether it was the cry of hasty and inconsiderate legislation. Let him ask them what were the symptoms by which they were to judge? Let him remind them, in order that they might form an opinion on this point, which lay at the very bottom of the decision to which they were this night to come, let him remind them what were the symptoms which led to the inference that the desire of the

nation for this measure rested on a continued and deliberately formed opinion. He would remind them, then, that the principles on which this Bill was formed were first brought under the consideration of the public so long as eighty years ago, when the first edition of Dr. Adam Smith's immortal work was published, in which he laid down, with a force of reasoning which the experience of succeeding years had fully justified, that it was wise and just to emancipate commerce from all artificial restrictions. That doctrine was not long in working conviction in the minds of all theoretical men; every political philosopher in every quarter of the globe was soon found adhering to that principle; but it was long before those engaged in the practical affairs of life would concede it—before practical statesmen and manufacturers and farmers would consent to admit the validity of the doctrines of Adam Smith. But at length they did begin to yield; the authority of those maxims of commercial wisdom which had long been received as infallible by philosophers in their closets, began also to be recognised in the councils of the nation; at first in a hesitating and timid manner, but still a silent and gradual advance was being made to their consummation. As discussion went on, as the good effects were experienced of the partial measures which had been founded on those principles, more and more converts came over. In Parliament and in the country every succeeding year showed an increase of strength to that great cause of truth and of reason. In his own recollection of political life, how vast were the changes which he had seen on this subject! Nineteen years ago, when he first voted on these questions in the other House of Parliament, in favour of a very timid application of free-trade principles, he voted in very small minorities—in minorities as small as fifteen, and never greatly exceeding fifty; whilst those who were for out-and-out protection, who resisted the Corn Law of 1828 almost as strenuously as the proposed measure was now resisted, doubled and trebled their opponents in the divisions, so powerful was the extreme agricultural party in that day; yet they now saw that year by year, from that time to the present, the strength of the party in favour of the bolder and bolder application of the principles of free trade had been gradually increasing; and in the last few years, though they had still had large numerical majorities arrayed against

them in divisions, yet no man who attended to the debates in the other House of Parliament, no man who looked at the signs from which to judge of other men's feelings, could have failed to foresee symptoms of the rapid approach of that event in which the principle could be fully adopted. Their opponents spoke in the tone of men who felt conscious of defeat, like men who felt that their struggle could not much longer be maintained; and, last of all, they saw Her Majesty's Ministers themselves, who had so long been the ablest advocates of protection, coming forward and manfully avowing a complete change in their own opinions, a complete adherence to the doctrines of free trade. Severely as they had been censured, he gave them credit for that avowal—he had no doubt it was a sincere and an honest avowal. There was no reason why it should be otherwise. Their party interest and their personal feelings would have led them, consistently with their sense of public duty, to have maintained their former opinions; and when he found them unable to do so, he derived from that circumstance the strongest possible reasons in favour of the course it was now proposed to their Lordships to adopt, to yield to the irresistible current of public opinion. They might say the reasons that they had assigned for the change were altogether inadequate—that the potato famine was a delusion—and that there was nothing in the state of affairs to justify such a measure. They might say the arguments which they used were precisely the same arguments which they themselves had so often combated. They might say all this; but he did not think they would inquire what were the motives which led those gentlemen to hold other opinions on former debates. He did not wish to inquire whether it was a want of foresight or a want of moral courage to avow opinions which, though unpopular, made them in 1839 and 1841 still the advocates of protection. Whatever opinions they might form upon this point, it was impossible any rational man could doubt that the change which they had now avowed was sincere—and that they felt the repeal of the existing Corn Laws to be required by the best interests of the country. And he would say their adopting that opinion, their coming forward to advocate it, and their sacrifices for it, were a convincing and a striking proof of what was the state of public opinion on this question. Out of doors there were precisely the same

symptoms. Did their Lordships not remember that out of doors at one time the merchants and manufacturers of this country were as strongly in favour of protection as the agriculturists were at this day? Were they not the main originators of the whole protective policy? They, he believed, were perfectly willing to admit the fact. This great mistake in our national policy was far more attributable to the mercantile and manufacturing interests than the agricultural, and when he first came into public life this was the general state of public opinion. He remembered Mr. Huskisson being regarded as a public enemy in the great seaport towns in the north of England, and the repeal of the discriminating duties on foreign shipping being considered as something like treason to the best interests of the country. From those very towns, in the present Session of Parliament, he had presented petitions praying their Lordships not only to pass this Bill, but to abolish all protective duties whatever. Such were the symptoms of the desire of the nation for the repeal of the Corn Laws; and it was not a desire for rash and hasty legislation, but it was the continued, the deliberately formed, and the rationally expressed public judgment. These measures were the symptoms of it, and public opinion being so, it was not, according to his noble Friend's own admission, wise in the House to disregard it. That their Lordships did not disregard it, and that they did pass this Bill by an overwhelming majority, was no less his firm and confident expectation than it was his fervent and earnest hope.

LORD ASHBURTON said, that the question which their Lordships were then called upon to decide, was not only the most important proposition made during the present Session, but one of the most important propositions that could possibly come under the consideration of Parliament; and he hoped that if he only addressed them very briefly upon this most momentous occasion, they would not impute the short time which he should occupy with his remarks to any indifference towards the subject, or to any insufficiency in the reasonings which might be adduced against the Bill. He hoped it would be attributed to his individual inability to address them at any length, rather than to any other cause, if he attempted to do more than advert very shortly to the leading features of the present discussion, and touch very cursorily upon the principal topics

which he meant to bring under their notice. Avoiding, then, any further preface, he should limit his preliminary remarks to this—that in examining the merits of the present measure, he did not mean in any degree to reflect upon the authors of these great changes, and least of all upon his right hon. Friend at the head of the Government, with whom he had long been connected by bonds of friendship, and many acts of kindness; and he should be extremely sorry if, in the discussion of the present question, any observation should happen unconsciously to fall from him which could at all be construed into the least complaint against those by whom the Bill was brought before their Lordships' House. At the same time, considering the great importance of the measure, and looking to the immense interests which were at stake, he felt that he should ill discharge the duty which he owed to their Lordships, to the country, and to himself, if he did not fully and candidly state the impressions which at the present moment weighed upon his mind. Occupied, then, as his feelings were with the vast interests at stake, he should not upon this important occasion take up any portion of their time by attempting to discuss the general political consequences of the change now sought to be introduced. He did not stop, as his noble Friend had done, to ask what would become of the Government, or what party there was in the State which could form a Government, or whether there was any party likely to agree upon any general principles. Instead of involving them in such discussions, he should content himself with advising their Lordships to proceed upon their own conscientious convictions and their own views of the policy which would be most beneficial to the country, without reference to the possible circumstances in which the Executive Government might be placed. He wished, before he proceeded any further, to remind the House that the present Bill came before them in a very humble shape, being merely a proposition to alter certain duties payable upon the importation of corn; that whereas, according to the statement of his noble Friend who last addressed the House, it was merely a Bill for facilitating the importation of foreign corn, and so changing the average prices of corn in this country from 50s. to 45s., or some such trifling variation; but the Bill assumed a very different aspect when they turned their attention to the dangers which had been so clo-

quently stated by his noble Friend on the first night of the present debate, its influence upon all the great interests of the country, and its colonial, commercial, and financial system; its ability to pay its debts and maintain its credit: all these important considerations were involved in a question which, as presented to the House by one noble Lord, was nothing more than a measure calculated to make a slight difference of a shilling or two in the price of corn. To his mind the Bill presented itself under a very different guise. He hoped that he might be mistaken; but he could not remove from his mind the conviction that the House was on that night dealing with a subject of the very greatest magnitude. Nearly forty years had elapsed since the great question regarding the importation of corn first occupied his attention; and in the year 1815, with the very small claims upon the attention of Parliament which he possessed, he was as stout an opponent of the Corn Law then passed by Parliament as he was at the present moment of the Bill now under their Lordships' consideration. By the Bill of 1815 it was proposed to keep corn at the enormous price of 80s.; that appeared to him to be a most wild, ruinous, and fatal measure, and he thought it his duty to give it all the opposition in his power. He could not just at this point avoid noticing the singular coincidence that his noble Friend who proposed the present Bill should have been the identical individual by whom a Bill was brought into the House of Commons intended to fix the price of wheat at the high price of 80s. His noble Friend brought in the first Corn Bill of the present series; and now he moved the last. He was concerned in the commencement and the close of the system which was intended to regulate the importation of corn. As was said of Mr. Grattan, with reference to the political independence of Ireland—"he sat by its cradle, and he followed its hearse." But, without further noticing the share which his noble Friend had in those proceedings, he should examine the grounds upon which this measure rested. In the first place, he should observe that the argument which had been originally put forward for the necessity of repealing the Corn Laws, namely, the distress in Ireland, was now pretty well abandoned; for it had been very clearly shown that the distress which existed in that part of the United Kingdom had been greatly exaggerated. But, supposing the state of the

case to have been quite otherwise, it did appear to his mind that the best way of making provision for the wants of the people of Ireland would be, instead of opening the ports, to close them, in order to keep within the island the provisions which were already there, and assign them to the use of the supposed starving population. Of course, the House would recollect that in the autumn of last year, when scarcity was apprehended, it was generally suggested that the Government might open the ports; but to this it was replied, that if the Government assumed the responsibility of opening the ports, they could never venture to shut them again. To that sort of reasoning he felt assured that their Lordships would attach very little importance. The ports had been opened and closed again both by Government, by Order in Council, and by Votes in Parliament, for particular emergencies; and he would refer for an instance to the manner in which one of those openings took place under the auspices of Mr. Huskisson, and he would point out to the House the precautions which that prudent and able Minister took when he opened the ports in the year 1825. In the month of May in that year, it was apprehended by the Government that there was going to be a scarcity of corn. The price of wheat was up to 72s. A Bill was brought in to let in corn in bond. This was done by the wisest Minister probably that had existed in our time. The price, as he had said, was 72s., with a probability of a deficiency in the approaching harvest; there were 400,000 quarters of corn in bond, and this supply was let in; but with the caution of admitting it in three months, with an interval of one month between each occasion, paying a duty of 10s., and thus relieving the apprehension of a possible scarcity. What did Government now propose to do? At present, the price was not 72s., but 52s., with a falling market, and there were 2,000,000 quarters in bond. This immense supply was to be let in, not by degrees, as that wise and prudent Minister, Mr. Huskisson, proposed; but, in the face of a harvest which up to this time promised favourably, and in the presence of an abundant supply of food, they proposed to let in an indefinite amount of foreign corn. That course the responsible advisers of the Crown defended by a reference to the grand principles of free trade, and by vague declamation, which established no sound principle of prudent legislation or political economy. Many noble

Lords, and persons elsewhere, had stated their opinions how this measure would operate upon prices; and the question had been naturally put to those who proposed the measure, what prices they expected under the operation of the Bill, in order that it might be seen what would be the probable situation of the British grower of wheat? The only thing approaching to an answer was, that a noble Lord had told them that farmers were as ready to take long leases as ever they had been. He had a great respect for the opinion of the farmer with respect to the mode of cultivation of his farm; but he had no confidence in his opinion as to the extent or degree of foreign competition which a particular measure would create. The farmer would answer you with great judgment—supposing the price of wheat to be reduced to 40s. or 35s.—what reduction he should require in his rent, or what rent he should be able to pay, or whether he could pay any at all. These were questions which he was perfectly competent to answer; but if they wished to know what extent of cultivation upon the Continent would be caused by such a measure as the present, it was not the farmer they should ask—they must obtain the opinions of persons conversant with the trade, and who were in the habit of carrying on business with the grain-growing countries of Europe. In their Lordships' Committee appointed to inquire into the peculiar burdens affecting agriculture, amongst the witnesses who were examined was a very intelligent gentleman (Mr. Bamfield), who being asked whether he had made any estimate of the expense of growing corn on the Continent, said he had made many calculations as to the expense at which it could be cultivated both in Poland and Russia, and he found that wheat could be sold at Odessa for about 15s. the quarter, including the cost of carriage from the interior. He gave a similar account of the production of wheat at Dantzic; and this was the evidence of a gentleman well knowing the countries to which he referred, and might be safely contrasted with that quoted by his noble Friend, consisting, as the latter did, of the opinions of a gentleman who showed what was his object, and what he was aiming at, by sneers at the protectionists. The gentleman to whom he referred said, in answer to further questions, that corn was so cheap in Poland that it was often unsaleable—that the price varied according to the foreign markets to which the grain

could be sent, but that the supply of the country was endless; and he added, that the quantity produced could be doubled or tripled, and he hardly knew to what extent it was not capable of being multiplied. The Bill which their Lordships were now going to pass, would, therefore, bring into our market an overwhelming supply. The whole amount of wheat which would be at once introduced into the market, according to the returns furnished by the corn inspectors, was 6,500,000 quarters, being one-third of our annual consumption; and it would be followed up in the course of the year by foreign corn in addition; by which large supply, introduced when nobody wanted it, if, unfortunately for the calculations of the Minister, there should be a good harvest, the price of grain would fall to the lowest scale that had ever been known in this country, because the supply would be far beyond all our power of consumption. He said that, by passing this Bill, the Government would, at starting, produce all the confusion arising from such an immense introduction of grain. The price would not only be low, but the market would be paralysed. The farmer would go to market week after week with his corn, but would find that none but the first-rate article could be sold. That would be the direct operation for this year; and that would be to him a sufficient justification in rejecting the Bill. And then, as to the future, what would follow after these three years? Noble Lords opposite seemed to go upon the calculation that certain and adequately remunerating prices could be maintained; but prices were uncertain, depending upon various occurrences, different demands; and it was, therefore, most difficult, if not impossible, to say which would be the price for any continuance. Prices, he would venture to state, might be wholly independent of the cost of the article and the terms at which it could be imported. When their farmers, in 1839, were selling wheat at 35s., it was not because such was the price at which foreign wheat could be or actually was brought in; it was because it had been brought in in great quantities at some other price; it was because there was this superabundant supply; and because it was there, just as in the case of vegetables rotting in Covent-garden market, it had to be got rid of. The article was a perishable article; it was injured greatly by being kept warehoused any length of time; it was also kept at a

great expense; the holders were always in fear of the next harvest; and it must, therefore, in point of fact, be disposed of at certain times at any price. They ought, in forming an estimate as to the future prices of corn, to examine the condition of the northern parts of Europe, Poland, and Prussia, the country ranging behind the Carpathians, and that where the rivers of the Baltic poured themselves into the Black Sea, those great corn-producing lands, from which France, Belgium, and Holland obtained all their supplies, because thence corn could be imported at the cheapest rate. Many noble Lords said that they depended upon corn coming from America, from the valley of the Mississippi; but all that they could calculate upon was that it would most inevitably come from the cheapest market. Those countries of which he spoke grew corn on the speculation of a demand from all the nations of Europe; but all those nations, and not yet with the exception of England, might shut their ports whenever they did not want corn. They, in England, were going to depart from that policy; they were going to adopt what was called the principles of free trade; but they would do so alone, and not one of the nations which surrounded them would follow their example. The corn would come to Europe; none of the people of Europe wanted it; the ports were shut, and, as the corn must be disposed of, it came to that country the ports of which were not closed; it was poured in upon England. Now, he could understand such a plan as that which they were asked to adopt: it would be intelligible to him if he could see that other countries acted on the same principle; but it was not so; and, not being so, such a plan was altogether inexpedient and unwise. Seasons would most assuredly come when the people of Southern Europe, and Great Britain, would be able to feed themselves, and then the corn from the north would be rejected by every country except this; and therefore upon our markets the whole quantity grown for the supply of all Europe would be thrown, and the result would be an enormous depression in the price—a result, he need not say, most destructive to the English farmer. This argument he adduced for the purpose of showing how greatly they would be deceived, and how ruinous would be the discovery of the deception, if they supposed it possible to act, in such a matter as this, on the simple principles of political economy,

on the supposition that a set of people, or that different Governments, would all act in the same manner, without an object, and solely in reference to this one principle, like so many motiveless machines. And, while on the subject of political economy, he might be permitted to quote the opinion of a writer who would be received by all, but more especially by the noble Lords opposite, as a great and trustworthy authority. The work from which he would read an extract was an essay written by a noble Lord now a distinguished Member of the party with which he acts—Lord J. Russell. The calmly and deliberately given opinions of the noble Lord, arrived at, not in the heat of a political contest, and put forth in a speech, but come to in the philosophic quiet of retirement, would be received as most valuable. The noble Lord said, in 1820, speaking of political economy—

“Political economy was an awful word. It was appalling to think that the Legislature should frequently be called upon to decide questions involving the happiness, perhaps the very existence of millions of the people, upon the principles of a science which was ever changing from day to day.”

So said Lord John Russell. Yet now their Lordships were called upon to decide a question involving the happiness, perhaps the existence, of millions of people, according to the rules of a science which was said by the noble Lord referred to, to be “changing from day to day.” The science was known by the one term “political economy;” but all who attempted to define it at length varied in the definition: the premises were different, as different the conclusions; Ricardo differed from M'Culloch; and both from everybody else. Yet they were now asked to regulate the affairs of this great country, not by the principles experience taught them, but according to a visionary science, the consequence of which, if adopted, would, in his humble opinion, be the irrevocable ruin of thousands. The same noble Lord had said that the peculiar feature of the science of political economy was the difficulty of connecting any data with which it furnished them whereon to found, with sufficient certainty, a system. He (Lord J. Russell) said also, that if all nations acknowledged the same guiding principles—if different national interests were identical, and different national prejudices were forgotten, then it would be easy to legislate according to theoretical rules; but the complication of political interests, the existence of ancient treaties, and, above all, the esta-

blishment of capital which had taken place on the faith of a continuance of the policy under which these had taken place, rendered the question of legislation by reference to political economy much more difficult to solve than any one problem within the range of mathematics. It was, indeed, very easy for them to say that the trade in corn ought to be free; that, if our farmers could not grow it as cheap as could foreign farmers, they must let it alone; but, in being compelled to let it alone, they should not forget where lay all the mischief. The species of free trade which, in other articles, they had adopted, had not been attended in all cases with success. He was inclined to think that many restrictions had been, and were proposed to be, removed most imprudently; and even the measures under their consideration were unequal in different provisions, for there was no uniformity in free trade. The noble Lord (Lord J. Russell) had pointed out that in the event of a free importation of corn, they would have to consider whether the consequent effect would not be the ruin of the English farmer, the relinquishment of agricultural occupation as unprofitable, and whether, in that case, there would not be a total dependence of this nation upon the caprices of foreign Powers: and the noble Lord had termed it "a knotty question to decide." The noble Earl (Earl Grey) opposite had treated this question as a mere question of abandoning 1s. or 2s. of duty; but in his (Lord Ashburton's) opinion, it was the most mighty and momentous question ever submitted to a Legislature. It was one affecting the foundation of their Constitution, disturbing the domestic relations of almost every family in the country, endangering the tenure of their Colonies, exposing them to the mercy of foreign nations; and, as such, they could not treat it with too much caution. He (Lord Ashburton) had already demonstrated what would be the consequences of a too abundant and unavoidable importation of corn; the noble Earl in answer might say, "But you cannot have bread too cheap." He thought, most decidedly, they could; and that would be when it was so cheap that the lowness of the price would throw any quantity of land out of cultivation. What had been the prices under the sliding scale? The sliding scale had been greatly abused; but it had been abused without reason. In 1843 the prices were 50s., 51s., and 50s. 10d.; and it was impossible to say that those

prices were extravagant or too high. And if the prices under that system had not been excessive, what right had they to say that it had failed? He had, in 1815, resisted the advance of the protection to 80s. Since that period he had never been an advocate for any absurd or unreasonable protection to agriculture, as it was called; and his object in every vote which he had given had been to regulate the supply of corn on fair and equitable terms to the consumer and producer. He had voted for the Bill of 1842; he had approved of the admission of cattle; he had voted for the Canada Corn Bill, and, in a word, for every successive relaxation in restrictions which he had deemed more stringent than was necessary. But they now came to a question of a very different description—the total overthrow of a policy which had existed for a century and a half—the rejection of a legislation which, since the days of the Conquest, in different degrees, had been considered wise and just, and under which the country had prospered. The interests of an important section of the community, and of men who had applied large capitals to the improvement of agriculture—who had made every exertion to effect that improvement—who had even gone to the South Pole for the means of enriching the soil—were at stake; and these interests were not to be sacrificed at the bidding of dreamers. Mr. Huskisson—a great authority—had put the case even as strongly as it had been put by the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell). He said, in 1814, that the proportion of corn hitherto imported had not been 1-35th of the consumption; that, if proper measures were not taken to encourage home cultivation, it might be in the proportion of one-fourth; and that nothing could be more dangerous to the safety and tranquillity of the country than that there should be a diminution or stoppage in that home cultivation. It might be said that Mr. Huskisson had changed his opinions, and the great difficulty they had to contend with, in adducing any authority, was the never-ending changes of opinion; but, as he had died in 1831, it might very well be supposed that his declaration in 1828 was a final one. Mr. Huskisson then said, "I understand it has been urged against me, that I held an opinion that England ought not to depend too exclusively on other countries for the supply of corn. I maintained that doctrine in 1815; I maintain it now." He further said, "I am anxious to render this country, com-

mercially as well as politically, independent of other countries. The doctrine was general, both in Europe and America, that it was in the highest degree dangerous to depend upon other countries for the supply of food. The noble and learned Lord (Lord Brougham) who spoke on Monday night had endeavoured to show that this dependence could not be dangerous; and he had for this purpose instanced what had occurred in 1810, when Napoleon endeavoured to withhold all supplies from us, and when, nevertheless, great quantities of corn were imported. In those years, when he had the power of shutting up the ports of Europe, he still condescended to allow us a supply of corn, by a system of granting licences, which brought him large sums of money. But what was the price of corn in England at that time? In 1809 it was 94s. per quarter; in 1810, 103s.; in 1811, 92s.; in 1812, 122s.; and in 1813, 106s.; the average price during the five years was 103s. 10d. How much of that went into the pocket of the French Emperor, and how much to the English farmer, he could not say; but no doubt he considered whether he should gain most by bringing that sum into his exchequer by means of the corn licences, or by prohibiting the supply altogether. Suppose it had been possible for him to have forced England to make peace by totally withholding the supply, could there be a doubt he would have done so? Why, their Lordships might remember that an English Minister, Mr. Perceval, having taken into his head that the French army in Prussia would perish from disease if it could not get a supply of bark as medicine, seriously proposed a Bill to prevent the exportation of that article. Did they suppose, then, that foreign countries, if they thought they could derive advantage from it, would hesitate to stop the supply of corn? If they neglected their own agriculture, they must diminish the spirit of those engaged in cultivation, and largely reduce the amount of production. Those years of high prices contradicted another favourite theory of the noble Earl, that prosperity always attended low prices, and distress followed high ones; but there never was a more prosperous period for all classes in this country than that during the war, when corn was at 105s. per quarter. Large sums of money were borrowed from year to year, and circulated among the people; it was an artificial prosperity, and if the noble Earl would borrow 40,000*l.*, and

scatter it among his neighbours, he would produce an immediate prosperity of the same kind. He thought something similar was going on at present in the large sums raised and spent in railroads. He had always considered that protection was based on three main principles—encouragement of native industry, independence of foreign countries for our supply of food, and thirdly, that we imposed charges on land which entitled it on the other hand to protection. He considered poor's rate a charge on the land; he was not going to argue against that burden being charged on the land, because he thought they could not alter it beneficially, and therefore he thought they should continue to the land its present protection as an act of justice. Whether tithes were a charge upon the land or not, was disputed; it was said, "You have inherited your property or bought it with the charge, and you have no right to dispute it;" but it should not be forgotten that it was also bought or inherited with the compensation of protection. The question had puzzled the heads of the political economists. Mr. McCulloch admitted that the landed interests were entitled to compensation in respect of tithes; and in writing on the subject, after discussing the subject of special burdens on land, he said—

"Though the question is not free from difficulties, I should say, that owing to the local and other direct and indirect burdens to which the occupiers of land are subjected, they are liable to heavier charges than others."

The EARL OF CLARENDON: When was that published?

LORD ASHBURTON: it was published only a few years ago. Mr. McCulloch went on to show that these burdens averaged between 5s. and 6s. an acre. Now, whether this writer was right or wrong in his calculations, he (Lord Ashburton) wished merely to show their Lordships that those who denied to the landed interest everything in the shape of protection, and who took a strict line in that direction, acknowledged at the same time that the land was entitled to some compensation. He would now say a few words on the question, whether the British farmers were able to compete with the foreigners. It was stated that if the farmers of England were teased and worried a little, and put to some inconvenience, there was no knowing what could be got out of them. Yes, it was said that they wanted only the stimulant of distress to urge them to greater

exertion. Now, it was known that poor lands went out of cultivation when corn fell to a certain price. It was true the fine tenantry on the noble Earl's estate in Northumberland might not be much distressed by an alteration in prices; but the cultivation of the soil, generally speaking, varied with the price the farmer was likely to get for his produce. Of two farmers having access to equal markets, the one having good land would beat the one holding bad; if their land was equal in quality, the advantage would depend on the charges they had to pay, because on those charges must depend the residue of profit. There had been some information given on this subject before a Committee of their Lordships' House during the present Session. Persons who had farmed in the north of France, and also in Prussia and Poland, had given evidence. What did the party acquainted with farming in Prussia state? He said that $1\frac{1}{2}d.$, or, at all events, less than $2d.$ per acre, paid all the charges on the land in that country, including the taxes for the Church, the relief of the poor, and the Government taxes. Under such circumstances, and supposing even that the land in Prussia was of an inferior quality to the land in England, did their Lordships believe it was possible for our farmers to compete with the Prussians? It was impossible. ["Hear!"] He should be glad to know on what principle noble Lords would assert, taking into consideration the facts he had just stated, that the English farmers could enter into such a competition. The condition of the farmers of the two countries had been compared, and it was argued that when bread was cheap the poor were better off. Now, any information he had been able to obtain led him to a different conclusion. It was said that the small farmers in Prussia lived well as far as their household was concerned; but from all he had learned those people did not always eat wheaten bread; and they seldom eat meat more than once a week. That was, he believed, a different mode of living to that of the English farmer. It had been discovered, all at once, that in this country wages did not depend on the price, or on the supply of food. In the north of England, and in America, where there was a great demand for labour, it did not; and in this country, while there was a great demand for labour on railways, wages would be independent of the price of food; in Lincolnshire, where happily the population was not in excess,

the same thing took place; but when they came to the agricultural districts and the south of England, they found that the rate of wages did follow the price of food. The Legislature was now proposing to take away from the employer the means of paying a fair amount of wages. There would be a fall in the price of corn, and though it would come immediately upon the tenant farmer, he would soon begin to screw his labourer, and to call for a reduction of rent: and the labourer, not understanding political economy, or the deference to be paid to the superior wisdom of Parliament, might, perhaps, be provoked to fire the stacks of his employer. Then with regard to the parochial clergy, they must be deeply injured by this measure, for their tithes were commuted upon the average price of corn. Suppose the price reduced from 56s. to 40s., the clergyman with 300*l.* a year would be reduced to nearly 200*l.* a year. It was easy to say that if this law turned out ill it could be repealed; but it could not be done without throwing the country into confusion, and having mischievous people going about, setting up a cry of "oppression to the poor;" and of course it would be still worse if the Minister of the day should himself join in the cry. For himself (Lord Ashburton), he thought the settlement of 1842 was a very fair and reasonable one; but if the Government had proposed an experiment of a duty something less, they might have come again to Parliament to reduce that protection still lower afterwards; to raise it was a very different affair. To become largely dependent on foreign countries for food, and to have to pay heavy sums for it year after year, might bring us into serious difficulties with respect to our circulation — difficulties which were the real cause of nine-tenths of all the distress and penury in this country: the depression in particular manufacturing districts at particular times was traceable to circumstances almost entirely arising from a derangement of the monetary system; the Corn Laws had no more to do with it than the most insignificant act. Turning to the colonial question, he must say that the noble Earl who had last addressed the House had left untouched the argument of the noble Lord (Lord Stanley), and would perhaps have done better if he had delayed some of the remarks he had made until that noble Lord was able to attend. The noble Earl had particularly spoken of the Ca-

nadas. He must confess that some of the passages of the noble Earl's speech were far from giving him that confidence which the noble Earl seemed to feel. The question in those provinces, and in Lower Canada particularly, was a question of race. The people, although they had belonged to England since 1763, were French, with every anxiety to get back to France. What would be the consequence if you were to lose these Colonies? The immediate connexion of France with the Lower Province would surely follow. Who were the persons who, it was said, would be well satisfied with these alterations? Messrs. Lafontaine and Tachet, both Frenchmen. They wished to have entire freedom of everything in those Colonies; Great Britain was to have no more particular right in the country than France or Belgium. But of what use were the Colonies under such circumstances? Was England to keep the Colonies at all this trouble and expense, for the benefit of all the world? This was a sort of excessive philanthropy, which was very much in vogue in the early period of the French revolution. There was then a person who called himself the "advocate of the human race," who undertook the improvement of the concerns of all the world. We ought to take care of our own Colonies. The noble Earl who opened this subject had told their Lordships that all Europe was going to follow them. The only following that he saw were great praise, great admiration; but every one of them found that the system did not suit them. It was not in the nature of things that it should do so. The country that was wise (and England was wise formerly) looked to its own interests: it did not go on a Quixotic expedition for the benefit of all the human race. He had heard, it was true, that the King of Sarlinia was permitting the exportation of chestnuts; and this was the only symptom he had met with of a liberal policy. If you could effect your object, and bring all the world to free trade, he very much doubted whether all the world would be benefited. The whole of the civilized world was divided into a variety of different societies, of different language and habits, and it was very desirable that they should so continue. General amalgamation would be one of the most fatal things that could happen to the liberties of mankind. What would be the result if you could establish this principle? England perhaps might be covered with tall

chimneys, and manufacture for all the world, and be fed by all the world; but would your population improve under such a system? Certainly not. It was desirable that in every country every description of industry should be mixed up—agricultural, commercial, and manufacturing. The country which should be foolish enough to think that they could accumulate all the wealth of all the world, would soon find that all the world would be against them. He felt confident that their Lordships would decide this question without prejudice. To suppose that the Members of this House, the Peerage of England, the great gentry of the country, who had an interest in the general prosperity, would be actuated by any benefit they might derive by getting something more from their rents at the expense of the country, was one of the greatest delusions that ever entered into the head of man. If their Lordships should really think, after hearing all the arguments, that the landed interest of the country did stand in the way of the prosperity of the country, it was not only their interest but their duty to make such concessions as might be requisite. But if, with himself, they thought the proposal of Her Majesty's Ministers a great mistake, opposed to almost all authority and all experience, then they would act as he was about to act; and he never gave a vote in Parliament more heartily or with greater confidence than that which he should give against this Bill.

The MARQUESS OF LANSDOWNE, believing that the debate had reached its last night, would not contribute towards preventing their Lordships from coming to a decision, by the length of any observations which he should make; as he should be sorry if any noble Lord whatever who was anxious to do so, should be deterred from addressing them. His noble Friend who had just sat down need not be alarmed at the supposition that he meant to trouble the House with that "awful" subject of political economy to which he had referred in connexion with the name of a noble Lord in another place. He had discovered that Lord J. Russell, some twenty-six years ago, when a young man, and before he had held any office, described political economy as an "awful word;" and after sitting for so many years in Parliament, his noble Friend (Lord Ashburton) seemed to consider it an awful subject now, so alien did his mind continue to the subject, as he had indeed

proved in his speech that night. He would also assure his noble Friend that he should abstain from entering into a consideration of the burdens upon land. He should dismiss that subject, of itself an immense and important one, not, however, essentially connected with the question before them, by saying, that if justice should be done to the consumers of the country, so also should justice be done to the proprietors of the land; and perhaps his noble Friend might be aware that this was an opinion he had always held on that subject. But important as that question was, he would inquire of them to dismiss it from their consideration now, and to fix that consideration on what his noble Friend had truly described to be one of the greatest, if not the very greatest question that was ever submitted to their Lordships' attention. It was a question which had been the subject of debate and discussion for years past in and out of Parliament, in every assembly, and in every town and village in the country. It did, indeed, assume something of a new aspect as it was now presented to their Lordships, since it came before them, for the first time, in the shape of a Bill sanctioned by Her Majesty's Government and the other House of Parliament. He knew, however, that his noble Friend (Lord Stanley), whose absence he regretted, would tell them, as he did on a former night, that against that decision of the House of Commons he would set their decision of 1842. Now, unless he was to suppose that a House of Commons became senile and infirm, and incapable of judging, in the fifth year of its existence, he did not know why he was to reject a mature Resolution of the House of Commons, come to after much deliberation, rather than that which they had arrived at in the early part of their history. Another noble Friend of his (the Earl of Malmesbury) had told them that this measure had been passed, indeed, by a clear majority, but not by a clean majority. He would ask, however, if the former majority of the House of Commons was more clean than the present? He would also ask if they would ever arrive at any decision in the other House of Parliament to which they would attach the importance it demanded, without the exercise of some authority or influence upon the body of persons who composed it? All these decisions were come to, more or less, from influence or authority derived from the advice of those persons accustomed to use it; and it was not for that House to

inquire into the motives that had entered into the conduct of the other House, especially when, by a large majority, they sent up, as on the present occasion, a Bill to settle a most important and difficult question. They had no doubt heard of Members of that House who had voluntarily revealed the circumstances, the times, and the extent to which, of late years, in their private meditations, they had differed from their public votes; but though they had made those revelations, he did not think that he had a right to drag them or their supporters into the confessional; it was sufficient for him that they had altered their minds, and that their supporters had altered their minds also; he took the decision of the House of Commons as he found it, and received it as the undoubted decision of the representatives of the people. Before entering into that question which his noble Friend (Lord Ashburton) had discussed—the commercial view of the case—he wished to say a few words on two points, on which he had also touched, but which were to be considered as distinct, and preliminary to the consideration of the main question; because if these points were determined in the affirmative, they were such as would enable them to dispense with the trouble of entering into the commercial view of the question; he meant, in the first place, that question, so great in the mind of his noble Friend (Lord Stanley), and so much put forward in the early period of the Session—the danger that would arise to this country from a dependence on foreign countries for grain. He would not at any length advert to what had been so well stated already by the noble and learned Lord (Lord Brougham), who said that all the gigantic influence of Bonaparte over the whole of Europe could not keep grain out of this country. He would just remark, that on that occasion human interests were stronger than Bonaparte, and that every one of his attempts were defeated. Look at the high price of grain during that time, said his noble Friend the late Secretary for the Colonies; and he seemed to think that he had raised an argument against the introduction of foreign grain; but did he not see that, instead of suffering from high prices, and being subjected to scarcity, this country would then have fallen a prey to famine and starvation had it not been for the foreign corn that was brought into the country? So that this furnished a proof of the need there was for grain from other countries, to save

their labourers from starving and their farmers from ruin. When he heard his noble Friends taking up the sliding scale as that which best served the end of securing this country against dependence on foreigners, and was, in fact, the best of all the laws made on this subject, he must say he was surprised; for, if ever there was a law so contrived as to expose them to the danger of political animosity, it was the sliding scale. In the case of a fixed duty, or free trade, there was a regular growth of corn encouraged; and it was ready to be brought into this country when there was a demand for it, and when people found it to be for their personal interest to do so; so that here they had the security of private interest, to which his noble Friend attached so little importance in one part of his speech, and so much importance in another part of it. Was he to be told that the sliding scale was a security against foreign dependence? Why, after proclaiming to all the countries of the world that they were in want—as the sliding of this scale would show—was not that the very time when foreign nations—if they were capable of the conspiracy which his noble Friend thought so natural, but which never had occurred—would not that be just the time for those hostile countries to cut off their supplies and reduce us to starvation? So that the danger of dependence which so alarmed his noble Friend, would be called into activity at a moment infinitely more dangerous than any that could occur under any other law. His noble Friend the late Secretary for the Colonies had told them not merely that he was alarmed at the danger of being deprived of supplies of foreign corn, but he took an opportunity of referring to the supply of cotton from America. The noble ex-Secretary for the Colonies said he thought that the noble Secretary for Foreign Affairs would feel more comfortable in the event of war, or even in the apprehension of war with America, if we were not dependent on America for our cotton. But was it not most singular, if this was the state of danger in which this country stood, that the last act of the Government in which the noble Lord concurred, was a measure to reduce the duty on the importation of that very cotton, and to contribute to the increase of the importation of that very cotton from America? On the whole, he really thought the subject of dependence on foreign countries was one which their Lordships would

not do well to trouble themselves much about on this occasion. Apprehensions had been expressed by some noble Lords, that a considerable alteration in the social state of this country would be the result of this measure. In fact, it had been very much the fashion to consider this measure, both in this and other countries, as an intended alteration in the social state of this country. He confessed, that if the effect of this measure would probably be to make any such constitutional change, it would be the duty of their Lordships to pause and consider it very maturely; but, as he knew of no constitutional change which the measure could effect, so he was convinced that there would not be the slightest diminution effected by the measure in the consideration and respectability which attached to the landed interest. In all countries, in the poorest and in the most wealthy, and not more in the former than in the latter, there would always attach an importance to the possession of land, which would give the landed interest an almost preponderating influence in the government of the country. In countries infinitely more commercial than England could be—in Holland, for instance, which was described by De Witt as able to extract nothing that could be required for its own use from its own bowels, or in Venice—how did the landed interest stand? There never had been countries in which the proprietors of land were more fully recognised as the proper heads of the social system. In short, he thought this measure could not possibly have any influence to diminish the importance of the House of Lords or of the aristocracy and gentry of this country. He believed it would leave them precisely as they were now. Coming to the consideration of the commercial principles involved in this Bill, he must say at once, that he did not altogether approve of this Bill. But he and his friends, who were friendly to the general principles of the Bill, had a right to found themselves on experience. But, whatever his noble Friend (Lord Ashburton) might think of political economy, he (the Marquess of Lansdowne) and his noble Friends who supported the Bill, relied on experience as their guide, and its chief promoters were practical men; and it was those who supported a protective system that, in truth, relied on theories. He would say that restrictions on trade, as they had been introduced from time to time into our legislation, had been so many

experiments, which experiments had failed, and having failed, had been abandoned one by one; not abandoned, indeed, without resistance at the time the abandonment was proposed, but abandoned without any attempt being subsequently made on the part of those interested in them to restore them to their former position. He ventured also to assert that this system of protection, which had been described as "the settled system of our ancestors," had never had any fixed shape whatever; it was always changing—and yet that system it was which their Lordships were called on to cling to, as if it was recognised by long experience and by the knowledge of the good it had effected. It had even been said to form part of our Constitution and religion, and he knew not what; but if it had formed part of our religion, it must surely have done so unknown to the right rev. Prelates, for, in that case, our religion had certainly never been the same for twenty years together. It had been said, that the proposed change would lead to inconvenience and injury. Every practical experience had, however, proved the exact contrary. Their Lordships would find instances of the truth of what he had said, if they looked to the changes which had been made within the last thirty or forty years; the changes, he meant, in the duties on wool, on silk, on hops, on timber, on feathers, and a number of other things. His noble Friend (Lord Ashburton) had said that Mr. Huskisson was the wisest man, in his opinion, that ever considered these subjects. In that praise he (the Marquess of Lansdowne) concurred; but one of the first efforts of Mr. Huskisson was not exerted in maintaining, but in destroying protection, by abolishing the duty on silk. That measure, however, his noble Friend (Lord Ashburton) had opposed; for he had no confidence in the wisdom of Mr. Huskisson at that time. Mr. Huskisson was aware of the consequences likely to ensue—he had weighed them well—he knew that misery or inconvenience to some portion of the labouring population would be the temporary result—he knew he should be called hard hearted if he persevered; but he did persevere, and what had been the result of that abolition of duty? At this moment, such had been the increase of importation, 6,000,000 pounds weight of silk were used up in this country, instead of the 2,000,000 lbs. that had been consumed prior to the reduction. Was that a proof of the value of the system

of our forefathers? Did his noble Friend find in that an instance of the injuries that would be done to our labourers by the removal of restrictions, it being clear that by the removal of the duties hundreds of thousands of labourers and their children had been called into existence, who but for it would never have found the means of subsistence? So it was with respect to wool. There had been an immediate increase in the value of the woollens made here. Then as to shipping—one of the things which had been dwelt upon as one instance of the mischief caused by a relaxation in these laws, had been the amount of the tonnage of this country. From the returns, it appeared that there had not been a diminution of shipping in 1845, as his noble Friend had stated. There was a Paper on the Table which had been recently made up, and which was particularly accurate in setting forth the state of our tonnage, and from this it appeared that in 1820 the whole tonnage in the ports of England was 2,648,593 tons; in 1832, 2,618,068 tons; that in 1832, they would find that the amount of shipping entered inwards was 2,938,870 tons; but in 1845, after the relaxation of our protective system had taken place, it was 4,665,817 tons; and this was called a diminution of tonnage suffering under a relaxation of duty. Could anything be stronger or more decisive as to the state of the shipping interest of this country? Until other figures were brought forward to confute these, he should say that English tonnage never had been in a more prosperous state than at present. He cared not that there was a greater amount of the tonnage of foreign countries in the ports of England than formerly; he considered that a source of additional satisfaction; he was glad to find that, our tonnage having increased, that of other countries had increased too; he hailed these results, and he believed that both the one and the other were proofs that in taking off the duty, that had been done which was conducive to the interests of this country. But it was not the first time that these objections to prohibitory and protective laws had been advanced in that House and in the country, and that too by persons of the highest authority. He was satisfied that, as experience had proved, the objection he referred to would be perfectly groundless; experience would also show that the present objections were equally without foundation, and that the result would be exactly the reverse of that which

his noble Friend had predicted. In 1785, Mr. Pitt, who studied political economy, and who did not consider it so very awful a subject, but who always endeavoured to avail himself of it, and did so with great success, giving his authority to its application—introduced certain commercial propositions with respect to the trade with Ireland. Those propositions were founded on the principles of liberality in commerce. But there were not wanting persons then, as there were not wanting persons now, of high authority—there were not wanting then large masses of the people out of doors, as there were not wanting now, persons to say that the adoption of those commercial propositions would be the ruin and destruction of the country; and a near relative of the noble Lord the late Secretary for the Colonies (Colonel Stanley) whom he remembered as a most intelligent and high-minded Member of the other House of Parliament, came forward on that occasion, and presented a petition, enforcing it with a speech, in which he stated what the petitioners, who desired to be heard by counsel, stated, that there was that about to be done which would put the finishing stroke to the cotton manufactures in England. And what did their Lordships think that was? It was the admission into this country of Irish fastians and cottons. It was represented that their admission would put an end to the cotton manufactures in this country, and that the manufacturers, people, and children employed in it would all be set adrift. The propositions were withdrawn at the time, but they were subsequently carried into effect; and what had been the result? Unfortunately for Ireland, she did not produce cotton goods for her own consumption, and the cotton manufacture of England had not only doubled, but tripled, quadrupled, and quintupled. This was evidence as to how little that manufacture was dependent for support on the protective system. In the next year there came on, under the auspices of Mr. Pitt, who was anxious to put an end to the protective system, certain Resolutions for a commercial treaty with France. These were debated in their Lordships' House—and here he might observe, that he wished the present proposition had been debated in the form of Resolutions before it assumed the shape of a Bill, because, by the course pursued, their Lordships were debarred of the opportunity of proposing any alteration in the Bill. With respect to the commercial treaty, the Resolutions pro-

posed in the House of Commons were communicated to the House of Lords, and the treaty debated by their Lordships; and a person not of inferior authority almost, but of a different walk of life from the noble Lord (Lord Stanley)—a man eminent for knowledge and science, whom he as a boy recollected—Dr. Watson, the bishop of Llandaff—took up those notions of protection which his noble Friend (Lord Stanley) had taken up, and came down to the House of Lords and told their Lordships that they were overturning all the experience of their ancestors by this commercial treaty. Following or rather preceding the example of the noble Lord (Lord Stanley), who appealed to the time of Edward IV., Bishop Watson came down and read the preamble of an Act of Parliament of the time of Charles II. And what did this preamble, embodying the wisdom of our ancestors, state? It said—

“That whereas it is universally known that the wealth of this country is disappearing and ruin is advancing, from money being sent out of the country to purchase French wines.”

This was a sample of the experience of our ancestors, to which his noble Friend (Lord Stanley) had referred. Revering, as he (the Marquess of Lansdowne) did, the wisdom of our ancestors in founding the Constitution under which we lived—believing that they had laid that Constitution on the surest and most certain foundation, and had thereby contributed to the happiness and prosperity of this country, still he must say that his respect for our ancestors did not extend to any one of the nostrums which from time to time they had thought fit to apply to our commercial system. All the schemes invented by them, and founded on the protective system, had failed; and the noble Lord who presided over the Board of Trade, if he were to look over all the papers and memorials presented to that Board from time to time, would find that the commerce of this country had encountered more imaginary dangers than ever had been met with by any adventurer in a voyage, not excepting Sinbad the Sailor himself. If all those representations were to be believed, the commerce of this country had been almost ever at the brink of a precipice; but after a few years all apprehensions blew over, and the commerce of the country was always found to be upon a higher eminence than it ever attained before. He therefore again said that they had experience against, and not for, a protective system. But it had been said by

some parties, that they were prepared to abandon protection for everything but the farmer. Now, nothing could lead him to believe that the British farmer was the only person in this country who could be advantaged by protection, considering the facilities of the means of communication in this country, with a certain and growing population—he could not bring himself to believe that the British farmer depended on the sickly atmosphere of protection, and that he could not derive his existence safely and honourably from his own labours, unaided by any delusive idea of benefit from the protective system. His noble Friend, whom he did not see in his place, had quoted Mr. Huskisson as the wisest of commercial statesmen. Now, he (the Marquess of Lansdowne) wished his noble Friend had quoted Mr. Huskisson's opinions as expressed in 1830 instead of at an earlier period. He (the Marquess of Lansdowne) begged leave to read some remarkable expressions from one of Mr. Huskisson's last speeches, delivered in 1830; and he would leave their Lordships, after hearing them, to judge whether Mr. Huskisson could be quoted as a person determined to maintain the protective system as regarded the Corn Laws:—

“Our Corn Laws,” said Mr. Huskisson, in 1830, after the sliding scale had been adopted, “however expedient to prevent other evils, in the present state of the country, are in themselves a burden and a restraint upon its manufacturing and commercial industry. Whilst the products of that industry must descend to the level of the general market of the world, the producers, so far as food is concerned, are debarred from that level. If the price of subsistence—that is, the price of those particular articles which we never export, and are frequently compelled to import—be materially dearer here than anywhere else, that dearness cannot be shifted to the articles which we do export; it must fall in the way of reduction either upon the wages and comfort of the labourer, or upon the profits of those who afford him employment.”

These words were spoken in the very year when an unfortunate accident deprived the country of that statesman's services; and it was, therefore, impossible that he could have given any subsequent opinion upon the subject. Some noble Lords had spoken in terms of contempt of the opinions of the farmers; but he (the Marquess of Lansdowne) thought that every one would admit that there were no better informed persons of their class—no more long-sighted persons—none more intent upon procuring the best means of forming a correct judgment upon matters connected with their own interests, than the Scottish farm-

ers. Now, he had a list in his hand of the most recent lettings of six or seven large farms in the most important parts of Scotland; and, though those lettings had taken place in the present year, and one within the last week, since the Bill now under discussion passed the House of Commons, yet there was an advance on all those lettings varying from 10 to 25 and 30 per cent. Nothing was more clear, therefore, than that, if agriculture was to be ruined by the measure before the House, the Scotch farmers were exceedingly neglectful of their own interests, and would be handed down to posterity as the greatest of all possible dupes. He had always understood, however, that forgetfulness of their own interests was the last thing of which the people of that country could be accused. Again, they were told that though the system of free trade was good for other things, it was not good for the produce of the soil. But they had happily experience in its favour, with respect to the produce of soil, as in other things. They had experience to a remarkable degree in a very important article of agricultural produce—he meant flax. Flax, as their Lordships were aware, was formerly protected; that protection was, in a great degree, withdrawn in 1824. It was finally and entirely removed in the year 1842; from that moment flax became an unprotected article. He believed that the usual ceremonies were gone through of memorials to the Board of Trade, petitions to Parliament, and deputations of Members of Parliament to the Treasury, representing all the mischiefs that would ensue from the withdrawal of protection. Now, he begged the attention of their Lordships to the actual effect of this withdrawal of protection from the article of flax. The produce of Irish flax in 1841—a year before the withdrawal of all protection—was 25,000 tons. Two years after protection was withdrawn, it amounted to 36,000 tons; so that unprotected flax, instead of falling off, progressed with unaccountable rapidity, in spite of the terror and alarm which were felt by many at the time the protection was withdrawn. He begged still farther to call their attention to the evidence contained in Lord Devon's Report. That Commission sat in the north of Ireland, and among others they examined an intelligent witness named Blake, who was asked what was the state of the cultivation of flax? He answered that it was daily becoming more prevalent.

Another witness, named McCullough, was asked whether he considered flax a remunerative crop? To which he replied, that of late years it had become a remunerative crop. He (the Marquess of Lansdowne) had thus given their Lordships the evidence of figures, and the evidence of people residing in the country where flax was most extensively cultivated, that the removal of protection from flax had been immediately followed by an increased cultivation of that article. But perhaps some noble Lord would tell him that increase was owing to the prosperity of the linen manufacture. That argument, however, would not do, for the fact was, that protection was withdrawn from the linen trade at the same time, or rather he would say, the linen trade was relieved from protection, and placed in a situation of independence. He therefore repeated that he was of opinion with Mr. Huskisson—he did not mean Mr. Huskisson's earlier opinion which the noble Lord had quoted; but his last opinion, which the noble Lord had omitted to quote—that the Corn Laws were an impediment to the commerce and manufactures of this country. That was the dying opinion of Mr. Huskisson. If those who had in former days considered the removal of protection a dire calamity, had only been permitted to revisit their country in later times, they would have seen few or none of their vaticinations realized. The noble Lord the late Secretary of the Colonies, and others, had talked of the danger of the too great prosperity of manufactures. But he would ask, how had the agricultural community reached that eminence of prosperity it had now attained, but by the agency of manufactures? They were told last night by a noble Lord on the other side of the House, that they heard too little of the importance of the home market to the manufacturer, and that it was to that the manufacturer ought to look. But was the home market not also of importance to the agricultural interest? He had recently been reading an historical account of the county with which the late Secretary for the Colonies was immediately connected—he meant Lancashire. And what did he find there? Why, he found that in the course of 150 years the property in the county of Lancaster had advanced in value 6,300 per cent. But noble Lords might say that this was in the manufacturing districts. Now, in the three hundreds, which were chiefly agricultural districts, the property had advanced 3,500 per cent. Did their Lord-

ships believe that, if in the manufacturing part of Lancashire property had not advanced 6,300 per cent., it would have been possible that in the agricultural districts it would have advanced 3,500? He therefore said that it was exceedingly short-sighted not to consider manufacturing prosperity as part and parcel of the universal prosperity of the country, as much so as agricultural; and, although it was part of the necessary law of nature that manufactures should be subject occasionally to revulsions of trade, just as agriculture was exposed to occasional revulsions from the difference of seasons, he could not bring himself to regard manufacturing prosperity as a morbid secretion which it was the duty of the state physician to purge and keep down, instead of allowing it to take its natural course, and feed its operatives with the food from the cheapest markets. A noble Lord opposite had asked, not him (the Marquess of Lansdowne) personally, but many noble Lords on that (the Opposition) side of the House, whether they thought they could, consistently with the opinions they formerly entertained, support the Bill now before them? In reply to that he begged to say, that he had never concealed his opinion on this question. He had years ago stated it on that (the Ministerial) side of the House, and he had afterwards stated it on this (the Opposition) side of the House, and he had omitted no opportunity of stating his preference for a fixed duty as a mode of settling the question. He thought a fixed duty was preferable in the first place, because he was unwilling greatly to impair the revenue derivable from the Customs; and he was not ashamed to own that he had also supported it because he thought it most desirable that in all great changes of this nature, the sentiments, and even the prejudices, of large bodies of men should be consulted; and it had appeared to him that the proposition of a fixed duty was calculated to conciliate the support of those who were connected with what was called the landed interest, so that this question might be settled in a manner satisfactory to them as well as to other interests in this country. These were his opinions on the subject; and if he had had the settlement of this question in his own hands at present, he would have proposed a measure in accordance with those opinions. But the question he was called upon to answer was this—whether, if he voted for an Amendment calculated to promote his own views on the

subject, he would not, in fact, while nominally voting for such an Amendment, be really voting against the settlement of the question? He could not disguise from himself, after the sentiments expressed by the right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government, who possessed great influence in the other House of Parliament—after what had occurred last November, when his noble Friend the Member for the city of London (Lord J. Russell) published a letter to which he (the Marquess of Lansdowne) was not a party at the time—and after the general opinions which had been expressed in favour of an alteration of the law both in-doors and out of doors, that if an amendment were carried which had the effect of throwing out this Bill, they would not obtain a fixed duty, but that a measure of a totally different description would be adopted. Under these circumstances, he felt, upon the whole, that in order to obtain a settlement of this question, he was bound to accept the Bill as tendered by Her Majesty's Government, and which had received the sanction of a majority of the other House of Parliament. His opinion on this point was confirmed by the Speech of his noble Friend the late Secretary for the Colonies (Lord Stanley), who had directed the whole strength of his argument quite as much against a fixed duty as against the present measure—who had steadily taken the high ground of protection—and who had advocated the maintenance of the present law not for the purpose of revenue, but of protection; for that noble Lord had shown that no aid could be hoped for from him in the enactment of a fixed duty. He must say, that in anticipating the results of this measure, in connexion with the rise or fall of the price of provisions, he neither shared the apprehensions entertained by the noble Lords on the cross benches, nor the exaggerated expectations which, as he thought, were indulged by noble Lords opposite. He did think, however, that the Bill would be productive of great and lasting benefits to the country, by promoting a gradual and certain extension of commerce, based upon a solid foundation. He hoped and believed that, in this respect, the measure would contribute to the wealth and prosperity of this Empire; and that, after the lapse of a few years, it would be difficult to discover what particular class had derived the greatest benefit from its operation. He was confident that the exertions of the British farmer would save him harmless even from any temporary injury. He

could not adopt the opinions on political economy expressed by one of the greatest poets of this country, in one of his most beautiful productions:—

"That trade's proud Empire hastes to swift decay,
As ocean sweeps the labour'd mole away."

But he could adopt the sentiments embodied in the two succeeding lines, and apply them to the landed interest and the farmer of this country, that—

"— Self-dependent power can time defy,
As rocks resist the billows and the sky."

On these grounds he felt bound to give his most cordial assent to the Bill now before their Lordships.

The EARL OF ESSEX said, that as the measure before them was important, not only in itself, but as involving the political character of many of their public men, he felt anxious to state the grounds upon which he intended to vote; and he claimed their Lordships' indulgence the more, because he felt himself placed in the painful position of one about to vote in opposition to those with whom he had hitherto cordially acted. He had not arrived at the conclusions which he now held without much doubt and difficulty. On the one hand, he had been influenced by opinions which he had long believed to be well founded, and which he had frequently expressed both in public and private; and, on the other, his convictions had been shaken by late events—by the facts and arguments which had been brought before the public—by the opinions expressed by many of the leading statesmen of the present day, and by the convictions avowed, not by the Brights and Cobdens, or the Members for Birmingham or Manchester—talented representatives as they were of the manufacturing interests—but by statesmen, by many of their Lordships, and by large landed proprietors, who had adopted the principle of the measure, and whom he could not bring himself to believe had done so from any party motive, but rather from a conviction that the measure would prove beneficial to the country, without inflicting any injury upon the agricultural interest. Since he had occupied a seat in that House he had generally supported the measures brought forward by the Government; but, on occasions when he had differed from them, he had not hesitated to declare his opinions. In this instance, feeling most unwilling to add to the embarrassments with which the Government were surrounded on this difficult question, he would, had he

entertained any doubt as to the course he should pursue, have considered that the Government were entitled to the benefit of that doubt. He confessed that he had now no doubts whatever upon this subject, and was prepared to give a conscientious, willing, and hearty support to this Bill. He and others had been taunted with the sudden change in their opinions; but long before this measure was introduced he had entertained sentiments in entire unison with it. He had long advocated the admission of foreign corn for feeding and fattening of cattle as likely to be of the greatest benefit to this country; it would encourage the farmer to keep a larger amount of stock, and by that means to improve the quality and produce of the soil. He hoped still to see the day when there would be an abundance of meat and bread in the market, the produce of our own soil, at lower prices than the present; and he was satisfied that the increased consumption would remunerate the producers of that abundance. Among all the fallacies entertained by farmers none was greater than that high prices, irrespective of other circumstances, were the best for their individual interests. He wished them to believe the contrary; and he was satisfied that, by a liberal employment of capital—by the active exertions of skill and energy—and by the explosion of old and unprofitable modes of farming, and the adoption of new ones, founded on wise experience, the produce of the soil might be increased to that degree as to enable them to sell it at a moderate price, and to obtain a remuneration for their labour. However great the produce of their land, they might rest assured that there would be found mouths enough to eat it. Imputations had been cast upon him in another place in respect to this question; and it was stated that at a recent meeting of the Farmers' Club in Hertfordshire something had fallen from him to the effect, that he was altogether indifferent as to what should befall the small farmers of the country. That, however, he most decidedly denied; he had never said anything to that effect, and never would say it. What he did say was, those who would suffer in the change were farmers who had capital sufficient for their purposes, without the courage or the skill to use it, and those who had no capital at all. He could not see, for his own part, how it was possible to carry on the business of farming, which required to be well conducted, and a very great amount of capital, without any capital at all; and

success in that, as well as in other trades, was quite impossible without that requisite. He would not yield to any man in his respect for the farmers as a class, nor in his good wishes for their prosperity: he looked on them as an essential element in the framework of society; and he believed that on their prosperity depended mainly the prosperity of the country at large; but still he was of opinion that the thing most to be deplored was the insufficiency of capital among them, and their consequent incapability of doing themselves or their occupation justice. Many causes concurred to that result—some wished, it might be, to occupy positions above their means; others had the ambition to hold large farms, many occupying 200 or 300 acres, when their capital was enough only for 100. In his opinion, if they were content to work with their capital, and up to their capital alone, they would be far better circumstanced. That was practically the opinion of that great agriculturist the Earl of Leicester, who would not give a farm to any man unless he had 10*l.* an acre to spend on it; the result of which was a body of tenantry unequalled in the entire country, who multiplied the stock upon their farms, who were able to find employment for their labourers, and who had capital enough to bear up against those losses to which farmers, in common with all other trades, were so liable. It was asked what, in that case, would become of the large farms of 1,000 and 1,500 acres? To this he would answer, that there would be always found a sufficient number of persons hitherto unconnected with agriculture, who would embark their capital as readily in this as in any other business, when there was a fair prospect of return for it. Still, if more capital were employed in the small farms, it would be better; and men of capital, who were not now connected with agriculture, were ready to take them. If these persons were not themselves fit to take the command, they could procure men as bailiffs, who were ready to manage their farms. To his mind, it was one of the best signs of the times that men not connected with agriculture were ready to embark their capital in agriculture; and it was further a matter of congratulation, as it kept up the connexion between the commercial and manufacturing classes. He was at a meeting of the breeders of stock in the country, at which he broached these opinions, and a solitary cheer was all the response he got; one gentleman, indeed, told

him, that he wished to put the little key in the lock to open free trade. He was not then prepared to vote for that contingency; but the times had changed since that period. Free-trade principles were now promulgated by Ministers, and carried by a large majority in the House of Commons. His conversion to his present opinions was at least disinterested. He had never asked anything from the Minister; and he hoped it would not be imputed to him that his motives were of an interested character. He had made a sacrifice of his character for consistency, in the firm hope and belief that this measure would be beneficial to themselves as well as to the country at large. He believed the measure must pass; and he thought it better that their Lordships should make a present sacrifice of their opinions, rather than perpetuate a state of bitterness between the two great interests of the country. The doubt hanging over the landed interest had rendered it impossible to enter into contracts between landlord and tenant; and this state of things was almost as injurious to that interest as the measure now under their consideration could possibly be. He would not then enter on any arguments in respect to the question; but he could not sit down without expressing his regret that, in the preparation of the measure before their Lordships, more consideration was not shown to the agriculturists, in respect to the special burdens upon land that existed in this country. He confessed he thought the present was a most favourable opportunity for introducing and carrying out such a measure as that which was now proposed by Her Majesty's Government. Seeing that a great change had been wrought in the minds of many who considered, even in the year 1842, that a certain amount of protective duty was absolutely essential to the welfare of the agricultural interest; that those who once thought a 40s. duty indispensable now would be content with 20s., while those who had been for a fixed duty of 8s. would now be ready to compromise for 4s.; seeing that even the noble Duke on the cross benches was disposed to make a relaxation in the opinions he had entertained, and that it was no longer possible nor desirable to maintain the present system of Corn Laws, he did not think it at all disgraceful or dishonourable to avow that his own sentiments had undergone a change on this subject, and that it was more wise and politic for them, as legislators and landlords,

to adopt the course proposed by the Government. It was on these grounds that he would give his vote for the present measure, in which he believed were involved not only the improved condition of the poor, the social advancement of the labouring classes, the extension of commerce, and the general prosperity of the agricultural interest—a measure, too, which he ventured to hope would not only receive the sanction of their Lordships, but would also meet with God's blessing and approbation. He supported it also in entire confidence in Her Majesty's Government. It was of no use to talk of consistency, unless everything around them was fixed and immovable. But was that the state of this country? Even if he had not changed in his opinion on this subject, he never would have joined in the outcry which had been raised against the First Minister of the Crown. He would not concur in the accusation of political cowardice which had been made against that right hon. Baronet; and even if he stood alone in the matter, he would bear testimony to the great moral courage which that right hon. Gentleman had evinced, in sacrificing as he had done all party considerations in introducing a measure which he conscientiously believed to be for the benefit of the Empire. He hoped that Sir R. Peel's present policy would prove as successful as that commercial policy of his which had rescued the finances of this country from "the slough of despond" in which the kingdom was when the right hon. Baronet resumed the reins of office; but he had to say, in conclusion, that not only those men who had so long and so strenuously urged the abolition of these laws, but those who had consented to the attempt to remove them, in consequence of a conscientious conviction of their inexpediency, would be looked upon by posterity as the benefactors of their race; and the Minister under whose auspices the change was carried out would be regarded, when all the circumstances of the case were considered, as one of the most successful and sagacious legislators that ever swayed the destinies of this Empire.

The EARL OF EGLINTON said, that since he had the honour of seconding the Address in Answer to Her Majesty's most gracious Speech from the Throne at the commencement of the present Session, he had never addressed more than a few words to their Lordships; and he trusted that, upon this question, so important to the country, they would excuse him for occu-

pying a very few moments of their time. Like the noble Lord who had just sat down, he had no hesitation as to the propriety of the course he was pursuing; but, unlike that noble Lord, he had not changed his opinions, for he still adhered to those great Conservative principles which it had been his pride to avow ever since he had the honour of a seat within their Lordships' House—and he trusted, if on a future occasion he should ever again address their Lordships, that his speeches would not evince such a total change of opinion as some which they had lately heard. No one was more convinced than he was of the necessity of not running hastily away from party ties, or of separating on light grounds from those whose talents or whose conduct had made them leaders. He believed that it was necessary for the well-being of the State that there should be two or more parties in both Houses of Parliament, both equally solicitous for the good of the country, but arriving at their conclusions by totally different reasoning and arguments; each watching the movements of the other, and sifting their intentions and measures to see whether they were good for the universal well-being or for the good of the country; and that those parties should submit to be guided by one or two great minds; for it would be quite impossible to proceed with the business of the country if they were all to advocate their own individual opinions. But there was a bound beyond which party feeling could not go. There was a bound where the proceedings of our leaders might become reprehensible; he regretted to say that they had arrived at that bound, where this great principle must cease; he thought that they must be considered to have arrived at that bound when the measures of their leaders would force them to give up opinions which they had held during all their lives, when that man who had become their leader, and had with such great eloquence inculcated those principles—when that leader so prostituted his eloquence as now to come forward and oppose with the same unrivalled talent those very principles which he formerly advocated; then, indeed, it must be held that further obedience became reprehensible, and it became public men to act upon their own convictions. He had not the slightest intention of being personal. A great occasion like the present was not the time for invective, or for ascribing interested motives to those who had undergone such a change as they now witnessed. Much as he de-

preacted the Ministerial line of policy, he was willing to believe that Her Majesty's Ministers, in the conduct they had pursued, and were pursuing, were actuated by no other motive than an ardent desire to promote the good of the country. Although he thought it singular, that out of the thirteen noble Lords and right hon. Gentlemen, only one should come out unseathed, and true to the principles which had placed him in power, still he was perfectly convinced that the remainder were not actuated by any base desire of retaining office, but by a weak and extraordinary deference to the views of their leader. He would now proceed to inquire what causes had led to the late wonderful changes of opinion. The noble Earl who had moved the second reading of the Bill, had denied that the failure of the potato crop was the primary cause; but it was so stated by the Prime Minister when bringing in the Bill. He believed that although the statements on that subject had been greatly overcharged, still that they were not wholly without foundation. He believed that in Ireland, usually on the verge of starvation, a partial failure of the potato crop had caused a considerable amount of suffering; and if he thought that the passing of this Bill would preserve a single family from destruction, it would be a great inducement to him to support it; but he feared that its success would be attended with far different results. If Ireland was to be benefited by legislation, it was by measures leading to the encouragement of agriculture and the reclamation of waste lands, and not by a Bill which was likely to put a stop to domestic agriculture altogether. But they had been told that the farmers were a pampered race; that they had been made slothful by protection. No doubt many of them had not been so active as they might have been; no doubt that it would be well if they united the scientific knowledge of Liebig with the practical skill of Smith of Deanstown; but he could not understand how the competition to which they were about to be exposed, could lend them on to such a course of improvement. To make improvements the farmers must have money; and where were they to get money if the Legislature destroyed the market for their corn? Injurious as this measure would be to England and Ireland, he feared that it would affect Scotland, in which country he was more immediately interested, in a nearly equal proportion. In the west of Scotland there were poor

landlords and wet lands. The farmers lived like labourers, and had arrived at a greater pitch of agricultural skill than most men in their way of life. They were prepared to do everything that men could do; but how could they compete with the foreign cultivator if the price of corn came down to 35s. the quarter? They had invested their small capital in improvements, and now, when they expected some return, a cloud came across the political horizon, and destroyed all the sunshine of their hopes. It had been urged that they were to be benefited by competition. Now, as regarded competition, he should like to know, if a new railway were projected alongside of an old established one, whether the latter would be benefited by the competition? He believed that there was not a railway director in the kingdom who would answer in the affirmative. And yet such was the state to which the farmers were about to be reduced. Perhaps the result would be something like the case of the two coaches which carried the passengers for nothing, and at last gave them a good dinner into the bargain. This was very pleasant for the passengers as long as the competition lasted; but the upshot was, that both establishments became bankrupt, and the road was left without any coach at all. Cheap bread might be a good thing, but they should also see that the people had the money to buy it; they should take care that as prices were reduced wages did not become lower, and also, that ultimately foreign producers, seeing we were at their mercy, did not conspire to make bread dearer than ever. He believed that it was the hope of low wages, and not of cheap bread, that had produced the Cobdens and the Brights, and the quarter of a million fund. It was that which stimulated the attempts making in every direction to usurp the electoral franchise of the country. This was not so much a landlord's or tenant's as it was a labourer's question. The labourer might see savoury viands in the shop windows; he might hear that carriages had become cheaper; but if his wages were reduced, he would soon wish to see dear bread again, provided it brought back with it its former concomitant—fair and remunerative wages. They had been told that the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government was induced to propose his late free-trade measures by the success of his Tariff in 1842. Perhaps three years' experience of the present measures might lead him to some change equal

to a repeal of the Reform Bill, or the destruction of the Irish Church. There were very few indeed of their Lordships, he felt assured, who approved of the Bill itself, however circumstances might induce them to deal with it. As to himself, he considered there was never a case in which their Lordships were more called upon to reject a measure sent up from the other House; never a case more urgently requiring their interposition to save the country from the effects of rash legislation elsewhere; never a case in which they were more called upon to make necessary an appeal to the country. The mere temporary change of Ministry that had occurred a few months ago, the half-dozen Cabinet Councils, the two or three trips down to Windsor Castle, and the two or three meetings in Chesham-place, did not represent the feelings of the country, nor did it follow at all from the result of these proceedings of the chiefs of the two parties that any change had taken place in the opinion of the people on this subject. What that opinion was might be clearly understood from the fact, that the late Ministry were turned out of office because they were opposed to protection, and that the present Ministry came into office on the sole pretence of their being champions of protection. It appeared to him, that if their Lordships did not, under the circumstances, exercise their prerogative in behalf of the people, the question might very fairly be asked—"Of what use is the House of Lords?" and he, for one, should have some difficulty in answering the question. If, when an appeal had been made to the people, it should appear that the people's opinion had changed on this subject, and that they were in favour of free trade, he, for one, was not prepared to say that their Lordships would be justified in opposing the wishes of the people. As it was, there being no reason whatever to suppose that the public had altered their views, he called upon their Lordships, as the hereditary guardians of the people, to reject this measure—he called upon the noble Duke, but for whose consent this Bill would never have been brought before them, to come forward and once more save the country that he had already so often saved. He implored their Lordships to refuse any share in a legislation which involved such discredit upon the character of British statesmen.

LORD BEAUMONT said: I will not allow this debate to be crushed, and if the

noble Earl (Earl of Dalhousie) persists in attempting to do so, I will move an adjournment, and divide until I succeed in carrying the Motion. I am surprised at the noble Earl's endeavours to prevent my addressing the House, because an understanding had been come to, that after one more speech on this side, he should be allowed to conclude the debate; and I actually whispered to him across the Table that I would purposely avoid going into the details of the question at any length, feeling as anxious as he is, and as all your Lordships must be, that this debate should come to a close. It was my intention when I rose to have given a promise to the effect that I would confine within a very small compass my remarks, although I must confess it is with pain and reluctance I do so, because I feel much on this subject; I have studied it attentively, thought much on it, listened to every speech which has been made in the course of the debate, and though the subject has been ably handled, I think there are still some important points which have not as yet been alluded to. But, my Lords, notwithstanding my strong feeling on the question, and natural anxiety to go into it at length, I will do violence to my own feelings, and give now the pledge I should have given if not interrupted by the noble Earl. If, therefore, your Lordships will lend me your attention for a few minutes, you will find I am not going to abuse your indulgence. If, my Lords, in the few remarks to which I intend to confine myself, I do not dwell on that portion of the subject on which so much stress has been laid in the earlier part of this debate, namely, the great change which has come over noble Lords' minds, I trust your Lordships will not attribute my silence to the small value I may be supposed to attach to consistency of character in public men, or imagine for a moment that I underrate the necessity of political honesty. I feel as sensibly as any man the serious shock which public morality must have sustained by the sudden adoption by the present Government of this injurious and uncalled-for measure; and if the question of the conduct of Ministers were brought forward in a separate form, I should think this House justified in notifying by a resolution their condemnation of the flagrant dereliction of their avowed political principles; and if such a resolution was submitted to our consideration, I should not hesitate to vote for it. But on the present occasion I

would fain have seen the discussion confined to the merits of the Bill at this moment before us. I wished to have seen the question considered exclusively whether or no you are now to abandon altogether the principle which has for so many years guided your commercial policy, and if so, whether or no the measure proposed by Government is the best mode of accomplishing the object. These were the grounds, my Lords, on which I hoped to have seen this question discussed, and the only grounds. I need not say how completely my hopes have been disappointed, for with the exception of the noble Marquess on this side of the House, and the noble Earl who sits near him, no attempt has been made to defend this measure on its own merits, nor any argument put forward for its unqualified adoption. None at least have been advanced by the Government; for what was the case with regard to the noble Earl who opened the debate and moved the second reading of the Bill? Did he not devote nearly the whole of his speech to a defence of his own conduct, and waste a long period of the time in endeavouring to reconcile his present vote with his principles by avowing that all his former votes were in violation of them? To excuse the single vote he was about to give in accordance with his now acknowledged devotion to free trade, he brought forward a long list of votes he had given against his long but secretly entertained opinions. That portion which was by far the longest of the noble Earl's speech may have been conclusive; and your Lordships have the satisfaction of now knowing, that in the noble Earl you have long had a sincere advocate of the doctrines of free trade, although he never ventured to acknowledge them, but invariably did his utmost to prevent their adoption. In the remainder of the noble Earl's speech an attempt, but a very feeble one, was made to draw an argument in favour of the measure from the position of Ireland. After partially abandoning the famine, he said it is perfectly true that a considerable quantity of grain has been imported into this country from Ireland notwithstanding the distress there; but, added the noble Earl, the motive of this exportation of grain was to get money here where the market was high, in order to purchase other food in Ireland where the markets were lower. And yet in the very next sentence the noble Earl told you he was about to take away the very protection which kept that

high market open to Ireland, and thus cut off the only source from which Ireland could receive money to meet her distresses. This measure has along with its other evil qualities the additional misfortune to prevent a certain good coming out of a great evil. The potato disease in Ireland, much as it was to be lamented, might have led to some good results: it might have taught those improvident people no longer to rely solely on one kind of green crop, but to see the advantage of sowing a greater breadth of white crops, so as to have the means of raising money by exporting their corn to the high markets of England whenever seasons obliged them to purchase food in consequence of their own potatoes failing. In fact, I believe that had it not been for this ill-timed measure, much more attention would have been paid in Ireland to the cultivation of wheat, which, if the people of that country were too poor to consume themselves, they might have sold in England, and thus been enabled with the profits to have bought abundant though cheaper food. So poor a case did the noble Earl make out of his single argument on the merits of the Bill, that I felt regret at seeing the noble Lord (Lord Stanley) rise to oppose the measure so early in the debate, lest he should waste his strength in combating a shadow, as no real or substantial case had been set up on the part of the Government. The noble Lord, however, did for his opponent what his opponents could not do for themselves: he first set up each argument ever raised in favour of free trade, placed it in the very strongest position, and then deliberately and completely demolished it. Some of the statements made in that extraordinary speech were commented upon by my noble and learned Friend. It had been shown that in our trade with Russia we took more goods from her than she took in return from us, leaving the inference to be drawn that the balance was made up by the export of gold. My noble and learned Friend said, no matter if we did send gold in exchange for corn. Now I perfectly agree in the opinion that if we take from Russia grain and other raw materials to the amount of four or five millions, she must take in return from us four or five millions, as the case may be—that is, an equal value of manufactured goods or gold, and that it matters little whether it be gold or manufactured goods, provided when in the circle of trade that gold returns to our shores, we buy it back

on the same terms as we send it out. The gold will certainly return, not directly from Russia, but through other countries trafficking with Russia. For instance, Russia requires the products of Turkey, Persia, and other countries, being articles of produce which her own soil does not afford her. She exchanges the gold she receives from us for these products of other countries; and these other countries send us back the gold in return for our manufactured goods whenever there is a balance against their export trade to this country. But then there is this further consideration. The gold when it leaves our shores represents a certain quantity of labour in this country: when it returns it represents a certain quantity of labour in the country from which we import it. Its value depends upon the value of labour in the country which returns it for goods; and thus when we buy it back, it requires more goods than it represented in this country before it left it. This accounts for what was stated by a noble Earl last night: the noble Earl said British goods are selling very cheap in many foreign markets; and I have heard it stated that at Trebizonde, Teheran, and Smyrna, English manufactured cottons were cheaper than in our own markets. In our trade with those countries our exports exceed our imports, and the balance is made up by returns in gold; but the price paid in goods for the gold is in proportion to the quantity of labour that gold represents in those countries; and as labour is cheaper in those countries than here, the quantity represented by the gold is greater, and consequently a greater quantity of goods is required in return for it. This accounts for the extraordinary difference in the prices of the same description of British goods in different markets, and explains the cheapness the noble Earl alluded to. I will now bring evidence in support of the small profits I have been contending that our foreign trade brings in comparison with our home trade. [*Interruption by Lord Brougham.*] I never was deterred by the noble and learned Lord's interruptions from freely commenting on his erroneous arguments; nor will I now submit to his irregular interference. To proceed with the subject: our exports depend upon the extent of our imports, and therefore you say, let us increase the amount of our imports of corn, in order to extend the export of our manufactured goods. But I argue that your export trade is limited by other

causes independent of the Corn Law, and that the manufacturer's profits in the foreign trade are much smaller than in the home market, and that he will injure the latter if he attempts to bolster up the former by a repeal of the Corn Law. I refer to the evidence of Mr. Greg, as given before the Land Burdens Committee, in support of what I have said as to return cargoes:—

"We now export largely of those goods which are calculated for the Chinese market, that is to say, shirtings and yarns. The exporters are selling at less and less prices; then, as to the articles they want as returns they bid higher and higher, and between the two they are now completely fast, and there is a heavy loss on every transaction."

Such is Mr. Greg's account of our trade with China; and yet to extend such an unprofitable system as this, you call upon us to endanger a portion of our home markets. If the value of labour in this country was reduced to the level of the value of labour in the countries we trade with, and from which we take gold in return, there would be the same gain in such foreign markets as in the home markets; and it would not matter if the exchange was carried on through the circulation of gold or not, for it would not require a greater quantity of goods to purchase it back than it represented when circulating in this country. I fear, therefore, that any great extension of our imports would eventually tend to lower labour in this country to the continental level. The great object, however, of the free trader is to extend our trade by increasing our imports of corn. Let us, therefore, see what room there is for this increase without displacing our home produce. The population of England and Wales is 16,000,000; each person is supposed to be capable of consuming one quarter of wheat. It is stated that in England and Wales there are 20,000,000 acres of arable land; according to the four-course system of farming 5,000,000 acres would be in wheat. Supposing that each acre yields three quarters of wheat,—that is less than many lands bear, but a fair average,—the quantity produced would be 15,000,000 quarters, being only 1,000,000 less than the whole quantity required for the consumption of the country. That 1,000,000 is now made up by importations from Ireland, the Colonies, and foreign countries. The power of this country to consume wheat is limited to sixteen million quarters; and as fifteen are produced here, any import over and above 1,000,000

must displace British corn in the market. It should be remembered, that in England the lowest description of food of the poorest people is wheaten bread. It is the last resource, the last article to which the distressed artisan is reduced; he never falls back, as the people of other countries, on roots, or oats, or rye, but he invariably at the present day considers wheaten bread as the humblest food to which he can be reduced; he looks for nothing between that description of food and starvation. There are returns accessible to all your Lordships, which show that during the periods when distress prevails in Leeds and Sheffield, the consumption of wheat is greater than when trade is flourishing, and the artisan receiving high wages; because, when well paid, the people are enabled to purchase butchers' meat, and consequently substitute meat for an extra quantity of bread. When, on the contrary, the shambles are deserted, and the people can no longer afford to indulge in the luxury of meat, they consume an additional quantity of bread, and thus results the increased demand for wheat. It follows, then, from what I have said, that an improvement in the condition of the people will not increase the demand for wheat, but rather decrease it by enabling them to indulge in meat or a superior kind of diet. I therefore affirm, and I do so advisedly, that there is no deficiency of corn, and little room, if any, for an increased importation from foreign countries, unless you withdraw some of our home produce. The most modest, however, of the free traders state, that at least 2,000,000 quarters of corn will be brought to this country over and above our present imports, and to that extent our export of manufactured goods will be extended. True; but if even in seasons of depression, when the people are reduced to bread as their only food, 1,000,000 quarters is the utmost additional wheat they can consume over and above our home produce, where are these 2,000,000 to find a market unless 2,000,000 quarters of English wheat be withdrawn? My noble Friend (Earl Grey) has allowed that in many seasons we produce sufficient, and some years more than sufficient corn. He said this had been the case, and would be the case again, notwithstanding any alteration of the law. If so, on what grounds are the expectations of those free traders founded, who assert that our trade is to be increased simply by the facilities our merchants will have of disposing of their

goods in return for foreign corn? In fact, you are reduced to the alternative of either displacing your home-produced corn, or of acknowledging that there will be no large increase of your foreign trade. My noble Friend also allowed that there would be great variation in the demand for foreign corn on account of the great variety of the seasons. Away then goes the favourite topic of a regular trade. It stands to reason, my Lords, that regularity in the corn trade is impossible: demand and supply depend upon seasons; and I am glad to find my noble Friend abandons the doctrine preached in the manufacturing districts, that this measure would lead to a large, a regular, and a permanent trade with the corn-growing countries. The noble Marquess, however, revived the fallacy, that if we adopted free-trade principles, the foreigner would be able to calculate the demand and regulate the supply, sending us each and every year a fixed and regular quantity; but how does this opinion agree with the previous statement, that in some years we produce sufficient for the wants of the country? In this supposition of a regular trade, the foreigner is to send us corn whether we want it or no. "At present," the noble Marquess added, "you give the foreign grower warning, letting him know when you are in distress, and when you have abundance." Why, that is exactly what I wish. The sliding scale lets him know when we want corn, and makes it his interest to supply us with it; in the same way it tells him when we have enough of our own, and shows him the disadvantage of exporting at that period. But, my Lords, it is absurd to think of concealing from the foreigner the state of this country, or the quantity and quality of our harvests. He will know, under any system, the state and prices of our markets. But it was argued by the noble Marquess, that the foreigner having a knowledge of the state of our markets, could easily stop the supplies during disturbed times; but how does this assertion agree with the statement of my noble and learned Friend, who, I am happy to say, is not likely at present to again interrupt me. The noble and learned Lord stated, that Napoleon, in the meridian of his power, when the ports of Europe were under his control and the nations at his feet, could not prevent corn from coming into this country, when the people of this country really wanted it. Yet it is argued that the sliding scale deprives this country of the corn in time of

need; which, I ask, is most powerful, Napoleon in the very zenith of his greatness, or a duty of a few shillings? Why, my Lords, it is absurd to suppose, after such an illustration of the case, that either the foreigner can withhold the supplies, or the sliding scale shut them out at periods the people of this country really stand in need of foreign importations. The sliding scale merely keeps back the supplies when you do not want them. The question had been asked, what should prevent the British farmer from competing with the foreigner? The answer is, simply that they do not come into the market on the same terms. The English farmer brings a heavily taxed article into the market, to meet and compete with one totally exempt from taxation. The English farmer brings 15,000,000 of quarters into the market, on each quarter of which he has paid during the course of production at least 4s. or 5s. in direct taxes and rates: the foreigner brings in, or is to bring when this Bill passes, his 2,000,000 or 3,000,000 of quarters, in the cultivation of which, if a Russian, he is liable to no rate or tax whatever. In other articles, when the home producer contends with the taxed produce of the foreigner or colonist, you put a countervailing duty on the home produce, in order to equalize their position, and balance the market. You do this on hops, British sugars, and would do so on tobacco if grown; but by this Bill the Russian corn-grower, who pays no taxes on his land, meets the English farmer, who has paid 4s. or 5s. some months previous to coming to market on each quarter of wheat he offers for sale. The larger quantity may regulate the market price; but if so, the foreigner pockets the difference. My noble and learned Friend knows nothing of Russia, or else he would not talk of the necessity of hewing down forests, clearing the land, charring the roots before they are able to grow more corn. In a large portion of the Russian provinces, vast tracts of rich soil wait but the plough; cultivation there requires neither the care nor the expense of our systems of farming: instead of a careful rotation of crops, the husbandman exhausts one piece of land, and then tills the rich and virgin soils adjoining it. I know not if my noble and learned Friend is a German scholar; but if he is I will quote— [Lord BROUGHAM: No.] Well, then, I will refer him to the recent admirable work of Sir R. Murcheson, in which is mentioned the extent of rich black soil which needs no manure, but

merely requires the seed to be broadcast on it to produce abundant harvest. If my noble and learned Friend is desirous of knowing the real condition of Russia, as regards the capacity of her soil, I request him to study the works of the geologist, rather than the political economist, and he will there discover the true productive capabilities of that extensive country. Now with regard to what has been said about Ibrailow, and the cheapness of corn in that port, I am not desirous of obtruding my own information on the House, nor am I inclined to rely on a few isolated instances of cheap cargoes having been shipped in the Black Sea as any proof of future prices in that portion of Europe; but I will state a fact, and give you my authority for it. A vessel lately arrived at Goole, in Yorkshire, with a cargo of wheat, which was free on board at Ibrailow at 12s. 6d. per quarter. I will give the particulars from a letter written by Mr. Hudson:—

"Aire and Calder Navigation Office, Goole.

"The cargo of wheat, 977½ quarters, in the ship Alexander Liddle, from Ibrail, was imported and warehoused here by Messrs. Edward Hudson and Co. of Leeds. Since then it has been sold and transferred to different parties. At the present time there are 822½ quarters of it in the warehouse belonging to Mr. Robert Mackie, of Wakefield."

I state this, merely because an attempt has been made to throw discredit on a similar statement made by the noble Lord who spoke on the first night of the debate on the faith of a letter from Liverpool. Your Lordships now know the names of all the parties concerned in the transaction, and from any of them you may obtain the fullest information on the subject. However, my Lords, I cannot for a moment doubt but that the price will rise at Ibrailow and elsewhere, should any increased demand for grain take place in this country. The demand must seriously affect the prices; but of this also I am convinced, namely, that prices, though on an average higher than at present, will be subject to terrible fluctuations. Prices fluctuate abroad more than they do now in England; and we shall be influenced by that fluctuation where we are dependent for any quantity of corn on the markets of Europe. A forcible illustration of this took place last winter in Germany. Prices rose with rapidity, and the people were threatened with an alarming dearth. In Munich and some other Bavarian towns the price of bread rose six kreutzers the measure, between the Monday and Wednesday markets. Years

of scarcity are not unknown on the Continent; and without some legal provisions with regard to the sale of corn, great suffering would periodically ensue. This leads me to a point of some importance, and to which I ask attention. In parts of Europe, in order to provide against the calamity of an insufficient harvest, a system of garnering a certain quantity of corn by the State is adopted. This is done in Austria, in Bavaria, in Turkey, in Paris, in— [Lord ASHBERTON: Everywhere.] The noble Lord says everywhere. Now, hitherto the bonding system has answered the purpose of the garnering system adopted on the Continent. By it you have had stored up a certain quantity of corn which was certain to be poured into the market, if the market was ill supplied. It was allowed to accumulate when not wanted for consumption; and there was a profit on introducing it whenever prices indicated a scarcity. This system of bonding corn, while it afforded all the security against want which the system of Government hoarding gave, had the advantage of being more economical and less troublesome to the Government than the continental principle. You have not here a scene, sometimes witnessed in Constantinople, when the people clamour at the arsenal for the provisions in store, and the authorities render themselves unpopular if they use proper economy in the distribution. The self-acting principle of the sliding scale releases the corn without the interference of the authorities. But now consider what will be the case if much arable land is laid down in pasture; and, instead of 15,000,000 qrs. home produced, and 1,000,000 imported wheat, we have but 12,000,000 or 13,000,000 home-grown, and rely for the additional 4,000,000 or 5,000,000 on the foreigner, with no grain in bond, and no Government stores to resort to; if in this case a general scarcity prevails in Europe, as it did last winter, when in parts of Germany they were obliged to have recourse to the garnered corn to which I have alluded, what would be the position of this country? When we talk of this country being dependent upon foreign supplies, it is not that we expect foreign States to prevent importations when they have it to export, but that we fear a scarcity abroad will cause an actual deficiency here. My noble Friend (Earl Grey) says, keep more stock, look to stock instead of corn—the great improvement in farming is to keep more stock; but my noble Friend forgets that the straw is as necessary as

the stock to carry out his improved system of farming. On an arable farm, stock is of the greatest use, inasmuch as the straw is turned to the best account, and the land receives a greater return in manure. But what I fear is, the turning arable farms into pasture farms; and though the landowner may make as much by his stock as he did by his corn, you will require every year a certain quantity of foreign wheat to make up your necessary supply. Then, too, will happen the very result for which the free trader seems to pray, the grievous object for which he strives; namely, a supply from abroad limited to the wants of the moment, no corn in bond, no stores held back, all that arrives brought straight to market, no corn purchased abroad till the demand here is apparent; and while this country is thus living from hand to mouth, a check may be given to the exporting trade of other countries, some temporary cause—some delay which would not be foreseen; and then I ask, on what are we to fall back? Under the present law there is always a sufficient quantity in bond to supply the deficiency, in case of any accidental interruption to our trade. [The Marquess of NORMANBY: Remember your promise to be brief.] The noble Marquess reminds me of the promise I gave at the commencement of my remarks, and I assure him I will endeavour to keep it by being as brief as I can. I wish, however, for a moment, to allude to what has been said about labour. Where there is a thin population, there is a disproportioned demand for labour, and wages rise accordingly. Where, as in this country, the population is dense and the supply of hands great, the demand is not out of proportion to supply, and wages are affected by other causes. No argument, therefore, on the price of labour, can be drawn from the labour market in America which is applicable to the circumstances of this country. If labour is high in portions of newly settled countries, it is on account of the thinness of the population, not the cheapness of food. The price of food only affects wages where the supply of labour is abundant. One word on freights, and I will conclude the few observations to which I promised to confine myself. The freights from some of the northern ports, from Selby and Goole, for instance, to London, are higher than from Hamburg to London, or from Hamburg to Hull. Nay, freights are actually as high from the interior of Yorkshire to Grimsby, as from Hamburg

to Grimsby. In consequence of your navigation laws and harbour dues, the foreigner has an advantage in transmitting his corn over the native inland grower. I believe this subject has begun to attract attention, and the farmers of the north will soon ask why they are not to be allowed to avail themselves of the cheap Danish and Norwegian crafts to convey their produce coastwise, without being subject to the heavy taxes imposed by the present system of harbour dues and navigation laws. On this subject of freights, great errors seem to have crept into public statements of the cost of transmitting corn from foreign parts as compared with our inland towns; but I will refrain from going into detail, as I have already occupied your time for nearly an hour. I must really be allowed to repeat that it is with difficulty I restrain myself from entering into the many other topics connected with this subject, and which have been only partially alluded to in the debate. I will, however, do violence to my own feelings, and reserve for some other stage of the Bill my remarks, knowing that from the noble Earl who is to follow me, and who is, I expect, destined to close the debate, you expect a long, and what is beyond doubt, an able speech, for unless something more to the purpose falls from the noble Earl than we have yet heard from any of his Colleagues in office, the Government will have introduced a Bill, without saying a word in its support. I say a long and able speech, because the Government are bound at least to show the grounds of their new policy, and the reasons for which they recommend their present Bill. We have a right to know what are their expectations as to future imports; whether they look for a great increase in our trade with corn-growing countries, or if they hope to produce a diminution of price in the food of the people; above all, it behoves the noble Earl to show the probable effect on the national income. If this measure, by reducing the price of produce, diminishes 20 or 30 per cent. the income from land, you will diminish to that amount the capital on which the whole of our taxation is based; you will destroy, to a certain extent, its power to meet the heavy demands upon it in money payments for local and general purposes, and thus reduce the material wealth and resources of the country. The rental of land in England is less than is generally supposed; the average rent of all England is only 17s. an acre; the average rent of the North Riding

of Yorkshire is 13s., of Merioneth, only 1s. 6d. This must be borne in mind, when an effort is made to throw the loss in price on the rent; for if I mistake not, the margin is too narrow in the rent roll of some portions of the poorer lands to bear any additional reduction. Why, even in Lancashire the rent of the farm-lands was not high; in Longworth, the parish adjoining Mr. Ashworth's factory, the rent was only 8s. per acre; and when the noble Marquess speaks of the increase in the value of land in Lancashire, he forgets that it is the mineral wealth and increased number of hamlets that have caused the advance in rent, and not any great sums given for the purely farm lands. Besides, the comparison between Lancashire now, and Lancashire some two hundred years ago, could scarcely bear on the present question; for it is well known that parts of Lancashire were at some such distant period considered as much out of the way and barbarous as any portion of the kingdom. The common progress of civilization would account for the change in circumstances and rents between the two periods alluded to by the noble Marquess. The noble Lord concluded by repeating his deep regret, that he was precluded by the lateness of the hour, and his anxiety to allow the debate to close, from alluding to many other topics of interest; but after the attentive hearing the House had given him, he felt he should be abusing their patience, if at that time in the morning he prolonged his observations.

LORD BROUGHAM rose to apologize for one moment, while he ventured upon a trifling explanation of the personal matter which had obtruded itself upon the House. He must be permitted to observe, that it was for the convenience of the House and the speaker himself when any noble Lord had misapprehended, and was therefore misstating, the argument of another Peer, that this latter should at once get up and say that he did not state that which was misrepresented concerning him; whereupon it was the form and order of the House that the noble Lord so interposing should be believed, and the argument founded upon that misstatement should immediately cease. But what he desired to say more particularly was this—that his noble Friend (Lord Beaumont) had entirely misunderstood the observations he (Lord Brougham) had made, with regard to Russia and the Russian trade; and not only had he misunderstood and mistaken them, but

he had given the direct contrary argument, for so far from having said that we exported 3,000,000*l.* or 4,000,000*l.* in bullion to Russia, to adjust the balance of our exports and imports, his statement was, that that was the argument of the noble Lord opposite; but that the fact was, that the export was made in the coffee of Brazil, and the sugars of Cuba. He (Lord Brougham) had been charged with being asleep during the noble Lord's observations. He could only reply, he wished he had been. But far from having been asleep, he had been wide awake, and he had been fully aware of a memorable promise made by the noble Lord, that of making a short speech, his breach of which he deeply regretted. Neither had he (Lord Brougham) used the argument as related to Napoleon as he had been said to use it. What he said was this—not that he had compared the potency of Napoleon to the potency of the sliding scale; but what he did say was, that we were so far from having to fear being dependent on foreign supply, that even Napoleon totally failed in the attempt to stop it.

THE EARL OF DALHOUSIE said, that he was sure their Lordships would do him the justice to believe that he was entirely sincere when he said, that in rising to submit to their Lordships the reasons which induced him to give his vote in favour of the second reading of this Bill, and to bear his share of the responsibility of proposing it, he did so under a deep and unfeigned distrust of his own capacity to discharge the task which had devolved upon him. He should labour under a feeling of still stronger discouragement, were it not that he ventured even now to hope that he should receive at their Lordships' hands a continuance of that kindness and indulgence which for some years their Lordships had invariably shown him. He would not have contested with the noble Baron the right to occupy the attention of the House, were it not that there was an understanding (the noble Duke would bear him out) that he should follow the noble Lord who had previously sat down.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND: After the noble Marquess spoke, it was right that a protectionist should answer him; their Lordships had already heard, that though the noble Earl had once been a protectionist, he was not so now.

THE EARL OF DALHOUSIE: He hoped the House would not permit itself to lose its good humour; he could assure their

Lordships that nothing whatever should fall from him calculated in the slightest degree to increase the feelings of impatience, and he hoped the House would not be offended if he said of discontent, which it was too apparent prevailed among their Lordships. In the course of the debate here and elsewhere, it appeared to have divided itself into two parts; one of these had reference to the merits of the measure itself, and the other to the conduct of those by whom it had been brought forward. There had been said many things which it was, no doubt, hard to listen to, and galling to bear. He was not about, however, either on the part of himself or of his noble Friends by his side, to offer any complaint upon that subject. Her Majesty's Ministers could not help being conscious, that however strong might be their own convictions of the expediency and the necessity of the course they had pursued, the introduction of the measure by them could not but have created feelings of mortification in the minds of those with whom they had hitherto acted; and he at once admitted that they had no right to be too quickly sensitive to the natural expression of that feeling. He assured their Lordships again that, if he could help it, not a word should fall from his lips calculated to increase any animosity which might at present exist. His noble Friends who had lately spoken, he was sure, would not be inclined to think that he disparaged their statement, when he said that a large proportion of that which had been stated by them had been stated previously in the brilliant and comprehensive address delivered by the noble Lord the late Secretary for the Colonies. He was sure that they would not think it flowed from any disrespect to them, if he directed himself chiefly to his speech, which was so comprehensive, as a whole, and which, in his opinion, placed the matter on those grounds on which alone he thought it expedient this question should be considered. The noble Lord gave his opinion not only on this Bill, but submitted to the House his views on the whole commercial policy of the country. He stated that he objected to this Bill because he wished to sustain protection to native industry. Now, the Bill which was submitted to their Lordships, and in which was proposed a change of the law, was based on precisely the opposite principles; and it was in defence of that proposed change that he now addressed their Lordships—for he felt bound to maintain the

opinion he held, that the principle of protection was altogether unsound. He believed that the principle of protective duties was oppressive and unjust to the consumer, because, if it had any effect at all, it raised unfairly the price of the article he consumed; he also believed that, in the long run, it was not really beneficial to the producer. He founded that opinion, not merely on the teaching of political economy; for it had not been impressed on his mind with some fearful and irresistible weight only by that which his noble Friend (Lord Ashburton) had referred to that evening, as that "awful thing," political economy; but he had derived this opinion from an examination of the history of the commerce of this country. His noble Friend had asked, where were the authorities for these opinions? The authority he should that night quote was the greatest of all authorities—he meant the authority of facts. He maintained that the history of our commercial legislation—more especially of the last thirty years, and above and beyond all, the history and course of our commercial legislation, which the noble Lord the late Secretary for the Colonies the other evening referred to so much in illustration of the Tariff of 1842—afforded demonstration of the truth of the doctrine he had just laid down. He must here beg permission to address to the House a few words personally relating to himself. In expressing the opinions he did now with respect to the principle of protection, he said nothing at variance with the sentiments he had ever expressed in that House. During the three years in which he had conducted a portion of the public business of the country, nothing in this House had been said by him adverse to the opinion he expressed now. It had been his lot to express this opinion amid the dearest and dullest silence of noble Lords on this side of the House, while it received the cheers of the noble Marquess and the noble Lords on the other side of the House; when noble Lords beside him were shaking their heads at the doctrine which he put forth, noble Lords opposite were nodding acquiescence. He recollected that upon one occasion, when he was called upon to oppose a Motion made by a noble Lord on the subject in that House, the noble Duke on the cross benches declared that if he supported the Vice President of the Board of Trade, it was not because he loved the sentiments of that Vice President more, but that he

detested them; but that he did detest, abhor, and utterly abjure them; some few fractions less than those of the noble Lord opposite. During the eleven years he had been in public life, he had not in any one case expressed an opinion adverse to that which he now held on this question. He had the honour of a seat in the other House of Parliament for an agricultural constituency, the county of East Lothian, and never to them, on the hustings or elsewhere, had he uttered a word adverse to his present principles. He never gave a vote on the Corn Laws but one, and that was for a diminution of duty and a relaxation of protection; and the very first Motion he had had the honour of proposing in their Lordships' House, was the Canada Corn Bill. He asked pardon for thus occupying their attention with matters personal to himself; but as that debate had turned so much on inconsistency, he thought it due to himself to say thus much. It would be unpardonable in him at that late hour of the night, and in the temper of the House, and after the fatigue it had endured, to proceed as fully as he should otherwise have felt it his duty to do in illustrating the views he held upon this question; but he did feel strongly the extreme importance of not permitting the speech of the noble Lord (Lord Stanley) on the commercial policy pursued by Her Majesty's Government, to go unanswered. He would not go into all the details, but would touch merely on two or three of the points urged by the noble Lord. But he had stated to their Lordships that he rested wholly on facts for the principles he entertained. He was prepared to go into the question, and to deny that the commercial prosperity of this country had risen from the operation of protection. In this he agreed with Lord Liverpool, who was not usually quoted by noble Lords on such a question as this, but who had said, at an interview respecting the trade in wool, he thought it more than doubtful whether the prosperity of the trade had not existed in despite of, and not in consequence of, protection. He was prepared to combat the statements of the noble Lord, and to assert that with respect to the woollen, cotton, linen, silk, iron, and indeed every branch of trade in the country, not only did they not flourish by reason of the principle of protection, but that they flourished as that protection was removed; nay, more, that they seemed to flourish all the better in proportion as that protection was removed. His noble Friend had adverted to various

points in the Tariff of 1842, and he made certain statements as to the price of wool and timber, and ships in the Baltic trade, and guano ships, the whole tendency of which was to impugn the good effects of that Tariff, and to show that protection to native industry ought to be continued. He must deny the soundness of these statements. Two years ago, a noble Lord out of the House remarked on the great increase in the importation of butter, and stated that that increase was owing to the duty having been lowered; but there were two reasons why that effect could not be traced to the reduction of duties. The first was, that the duty had not been lowered; the second was, that the importation had not increased. The statements now made were almost as unsound. He must regret the absence of his noble Friend on the present occasion, but he would endeavour to say nothing respecting the statement of his noble Friend which ought not to be said in his absence. One of his noble Friend's statements was, that his right hon. Friend (Sir R. Peel) had made it his boast that the Tariff of 1842 had had the effect of increasing the prices of articles affected by it, and that he argued that increased competition tended to raise the prices of articles. Now, his right hon. Friend had made no such statement. His right hon. Friend said, that notwithstanding the alarm that was expressed that the Tariff would have the effect of greatly lowering prices, those prices had not been lowered; and he distinctly stated that he did not mean to assert that that result was owing to the operation of the Tariff, but that he mentioned it only to show that the apprehensions that were felt at that time had not been realized. His noble Friend had also gone into a statement to show the effect of these changes upon the prices of wool, and he had taken the period from 1819 to 1824, when a protecting duty was levied, and the price was 1s. 4d. per pound, and had compared it with the period subsequent to 1824, when the price was 10d. But the statement of his noble Friend gave neither a complete nor correct view of the question. This he now proposed to do. He now held in his hand a paper which had been laid on the Table of the House, containing the prices and quantities of wool from 1818 to 1845; and the return was made so extensive in order to comprise the three different rates of duty which had existed. In 1818, the duty was $\frac{3}{4}$ d. a pound; in 1819, it was raised to 6d.

a pound, which it continued till 1824, when the duty was lowered to 1*d.*, and that duty remained until 1844, when it was finally abolished. Now, when the duty of 6*d.* a pound was proposed, those who urged that a protective duty was necessary were distinctly told by those who opposed the duty, that it would have the effect of lowering, not raising, the price; for that foreign wool was essentially necessary for combination with our own wools in the manufacture of cloth, and that the demand for home wool would diminish if foreign wool were rendered so much dearer by the increased duty; for the foreign wool would be excluded, and the price of home wool would accordingly fall. That prophecy had been fully realized. The price in 1818, when that protective duty was imposed, was 2*s.* 6*d.*; the average importation of foreign wool being about 24,000,000 lbs. During the continuance of the high duty, the importation fell from 24,000,000 lbs. to about 17,000,000 lbs., and the price of home grown wool fell to 1*s.* 4*d.* The consequence was that our woollens were entirely excluded from the markets of the Continent; and, in fact, from that hour to the present the woollen trade had never wholly recovered from the blow then inflicted upon it. His noble Friend would have found, if he had looked a little more closely into the subject, and had adverted to the price previous to the high duty in 1819, that the price had begun to revive, not to fall, upon taking off the high duty of 6*d.* a pound, and had continued to increase up to 1834, when it was 1*s.* 3*d.*; that was to say, the price was as high with an importation of 42,634,247 lbs., as when the importation was only 17,000,000 lbs. The price was now 1*s.* 4*d.* Thus it appears that, under the low duty of 3*d.* per lb., the price was 2*s.* 6*d.*; under the high duty of 6*d.*, the price fell to 1*s.* 4*d.*, and the importation to 17,000,000 lbs.; on the re-imposition of the low duty, the importation increased; and now, when it has reached 42,000,000 lbs. per annum, the price is as high as when it was only 17,000,000 lbs. Whether, therefore, his noble Friend had in the case of wool made out his position that on lowering the duty on importation the price fell, he would leave to their Lordships to consider, the price having been 2*s.* 6*d.* under a low duty in 1818, and having fallen to 1*s.* 4*d.* under the operation of a high duty. Then his noble Friend had said, "Look to the case of timber, you lowered the duty on foreign timber in

1842;" and then the noble Lord put it to his noble Friend at the head of the Woods and Forests to say whether the prices of Crown timber sold in England had not to a considerable extent fallen. Now, he (the Earl of Dalhousie) held in his hand a return, not of a single sale of timber, but of the annual contracts for the whole of the British navy. The price of oak timber from Tuscany in 1841, previous to the lowering of the duty, was 12*l.* 4*s.* 6*d.*; in 1846 it was 10*l.* 14*s.* 8*d.* Dantzic oak in 1841 was at 14*l.*; in 1846 it had fallen to 12*l.* But the price of English oak in 1841 was 12*l.* 14*s.* 6*d.*; in 1842, 12*l.* 14*s.* 4*d.*; in 1843, 11*l.* 1*s.* 4*d.*; in 1846 it was again 12*l.* 14*s.* 6*d.*, showing that under the reduction of duty the price of British oak is as good now as it was before that reduction was made. Those were the contract prices.

The DUKE OF RICHMOND: My noble Friend was speaking of sales of British timber.

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE resumed by saying that he was speaking of the Admiralty contract price of British timber. Now, the conditions and circumstances of the contracts were precisely the same in the four years to which he had referred; and however the contract had operated on the price in 1841, it had had precisely the same effect in 1846. His noble Friend (Lord Stanley) next said, "See what you have done with the shipping interest; the number of British ships employed in the Baltic timber trade in 1839 was 612, whilst in 1845 it had fallen to 609; the number of foreign ships was 566 in 1839, and in 1845 it was 1,845." He (Lord Dalhousie) did not deny that there were more foreign than English ships employed in the timber trade; but their Lordships should bear in mind that the timber trade was peculiar, and that those foreign ships were of small capacity, and unfit for any other purpose; they were in many cases kept afloat by the cargo they carried. However, the whole amount of our shipping trade generally with the Baltic had not diminished. In 1842, as was stated by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which was the first year of the Tariff, the British ships employed in the Baltic trade amounted to 3,519, with a tonnage of 613,000; and in 1844 the number of British ships was 4,424, (being an increase of about 1,000,) with a tonnage of 818,000, being an increase of 200,000 tonnage. So much as respected the

trade with the Baltic. But perhaps their Lordships would permit him to read an extract which must have greater authority than anything he could say, inasmuch as it consisted of observations stated at a business meeting, and related to affairs in which the interest of the parties present were concerned. At a late meeting of the Dock Company at Liverpool, the Chairman said that some surprise had been expressed at the increase of 100,000 tonnage talked of some time since; but he now had to deal with an increase, not of 100,000, but of hundreds of thousands; the increase in six months, from June to the 31st of December of last year, having exceeded that of any previous period, inasmuch as it showed an increase of 600 vessels and 209,409 tonnage over the corresponding six months of the preceding year. Now, what were the expectations of these parties under a relaxation of the protective laws? Did they expect it would be injurious to the shipping interest? No! The Chairman proceeded to say, that in proportion as they afforded accommodation, in the same proportion they would draw trade to the port of Liverpool; and supposing that at no distant period the rates of duty on other foreign productions, which were now virtually excluded, should be modified, it would not be in the power of any man to divine, whenever those duties should be reduced, what accommodation would be required at the port of Liverpool, which stood in the pre-eminent situation of having 203 acres of dock with fifteen miles of quayway. After this evidence from practical men, would their Lordships say that the Tariff of 1842 had been injurious to the shipping interest? Next, with respect to the number of ships that had been built, his noble Friend, when alluding to this subject, took the Returns that were on the Table of the House, and said, "Look here at the comparison from the years 1833, and the two years since the Tariff; up to 1842 there has been a biennial increase of tonnage amounting to 197,000, whilst in the two years after the tariff the increase has only been 17,000 tonnage." That was true; but the explanation of the circumstance was this:—In the four years from 1839 onward, there was immense speculation in shipbuilding. So marked and so inordinate was that increase, that an application was made for the levying of duties upon colonial shipping, and a Committee was actually appointed in the other House to inquire

into the state of the shipping interest, when the speculation to which I have adverted was stated in evidence as one of the main causes of the depression. In 1843, there was a reaction. That was the reason why the tonnage appeared to be small in the two years referred to; but if, however, their Lordships compared 1843 with 1845, instead of comparing 1842 with 1844, they would accordingly find that, instead of there being an increase of 17,000 tonnage only, the increase was 126,684 tonnage. In 1845 it reached 198,156 tons. The noble Lord then referred to the amount of shipping in the guano trade, and he said, "You have but 17,000 tons added to your shipping, and you have employed in the guano trade 219,000 tons." Now there was no comparison between the two items—the one was the amount of ships built, the other the amount of those employed in the guano trade. Their Lordships could not draw any inference as to the amount of trade from the number of ships actually building. For concluding accurately as to the activity of trade, their Lordships must look to the number of ships really employed, which was the only safe test in the matter. In 1839 the tonnage was 2,756,533. Under the Tariff it had increased in 1845 to 3,669,000. These figures speak for themselves. He now came to the other branch of the subject. His noble Friend, after stating his propositions with respect to protection of native industry, proceeded to apply those observations to the laws upon corn. He stated, in the first place, that there were high authorities to be adduced in favour of the maintenance of a law for the protection of corn; and he instanced Lord Chatham, Mr. Pitt, and Mr. Huskisson. He (Lord Dalhousie) estimated quite as highly as any noble Lord in that House, and had as deep and sincere a veneration as any for the wisdom of our ancestors; but he could not attribute to those ancestors, even to Lord Chatham, who was among the greatest of them all, the faculty of omniscience; and he said that nothing less than omniscience could have enabled him to pronounce as to those fiscal and commercial regulations which would be best adapted to the condition of society in this country at the present day. As to general principles of policy, or the eternal and immutable laws of justice—as to the principle, for instance, by which the liberty of the subject should be se-

cured, the authority of Lord Chatham was entitled to the greatest weight; but as to the question of the policy of a corn law, or any other restrictive law, it was impossible for Lord Chatham to foresee what would be required by the state of society as it now exists. Then with respect to Mr. Pitt, it was impossible for any one who adverted to the proceedings of Mr. Pitt in 1787, or who read his speeches, to doubt that if he had lived now he would have been the foremost to advocate the policy which had now been submitted to their Lordships, and to bring the whole weight of his vast influence and his gigantic talents towards carrying this policy into effect. Another authority had been referred to, that of Mr. Huskisson. Mr. Huskisson lived at a later period, and did not therefore lie under the disability to which he had referred. But he (the Earl of Dalhousie) willingly appealed to him—he called from the grave, his voice—the voice of the mighty dead—in order to show that the course now pursued by the Government in the circumstances of the present time, and in the present condition of the country, was exactly such as he, if he had lived, would himself have pursued. In 1814, Mr. Huskisson said, that while commerce and manufactures were encouraged and forced by protections and by restrictions upon the introduction of foreign commodities, he saw no reason why the laws relating to corn should be excepted; but he also said, that if other commodities were subjected to the application of the principles of free trade, there could be no objection to leaving agricultural produce to find its own level. He begged to adduce to their Lordships, as another authority on this subject, a noble Lord whose name he was sure would be received with the greatest respect, as that of a man of the deepest sagacity, of enlarged experience, and great and varied powers of mind—he meant the late Lord Lauderdale. That noble Lord was as strong an advocate of the Corn Laws as anybody; but a reference to his works will show that he advocated them solely because he thought, that while protection was extended to other interests, it ought not to be withdrawn from agriculture; and he distinctly indicated his opinion, that as soon as protection was removed from other articles, it should be removed from agriculture also. A noble Lord (Lord Ashburton) who sat beside him, repeating a statement which was made on a preceding night,

said that they were going to do that which no country on earth ever thought of attempting to do—namely, establish a free trade in corn; and he asked them to solve the question what they were to do in cheap years, when the ports of this country were the only ports open to the importation of foreign corn? His noble Friend (Lord Stanley) had cited all the countries of Europe, from Turkey round to Russia, stating that each and all of them had a corn law, and that statement had been repeated to-night. Now, it was quite true that each and all of them had a Corn Law; but what sort of corn laws were they? Were they anything like the Corn Law in this country? No, they were nothing like it. There was hardly one of them imposed for the sake of protection, and hardly one of them excluded corn the produce of other countries in the years to which his noble Friend had referred. He (the Earl of Dalhousie) held in his hand a statement of the various corn laws in Europe, which he would read to their Lordships. In Turkey there was a duty upon corn, as upon every other article, of 5 per cent. *ad valorem*; but in the Danubian provinces of Turkey, (which he begged their Lordships to bear in mind were the corn-growing provinces,) and where, if anywhere, a protection duty would be found, the duty was 3 per cent. *ad valorem*, and there was no point which the population of those provinces held with greater tenacity than their right to have the duty at 3 instead of 5 per cent. How his noble Friend could draw any argument in favour of protection from this source, he declared he could not see. The Papal States of Italy admitted corn free when the price was 48s. per quarter. In the Two Sicilies the duty was about 8s. per quarter. In Sardinia there was a duty of 5s. per quarter. In Tuscany the duty was a mere fraction. In Greece it was 2d. a quarter; and in Austria 3s. per quarter; and he begged their Lordships to observe that Austria, possessing the rich corn-growing provinces of Hungary, Transylvania, and Galicia, nevertheless in the ports of Venice, Fiume, and Trieste, granted admission for the importation of foreign corn free of all duty.

LORD ASHBURTON remarked that Trieste was a free port.

THE EARL OF DALHOUSIE replied that he was quite aware of that; but the corn was admitted not into the ports only, but into the interior without the payment of

any duty. In Spain and Portugal there was a total prohibition; and here he wished simply to mention one fact as showing what was the advantage or disadvantage of this description of protective duty on corn. The fact rested on the authority of official papers before their Lordships, and it was this—that from Portugal and Spain corn used to be purchased in the port of New York at 4s. 6d. per bushel, and brought for the supply of Andalusia; while wheat was to be had on the plains of Castile at 1s. 6d. per bushel, but which was entirely useless, because from the high cost of carriage it was impossible to bring it to a port where it could meet a profitable sale. It was undoubtedly true that Belgium had a corn law, and moreover a sliding scale; but free importation was allowed when wheat was 33s. a quarter. A nearly similar regulation was adopted in Holland. In Mecklenburgh a duty of 3 per cent. was levied; in Hanover 6s. a quarter; and in Denmark 3s. a quarter. In France there was a high protective duty. In Russia, a duty of 14s. a quarter was imposed on the importation of wheat. These were true; but were these countries in the habit of regulating their duties upon the system advocated in that House? No; and it was unnecessary to go further back than the present year to show how different was their policy. One of the earliest steps taken by the Government of Holland this year was altogether to suspend the Corn Laws. In Russia also—hermetically sealed Russia—the duties on the importation of corn were altogether removed; and in Belgium the Chambers were convoked in order to remit for a year the duties on corn. What analogy was there, then, in the course pursued by these countries in favour of a permanent protecting duty upon corn, or between their corn laws and those which it was desired by many of their Lordships to maintain? And what was the cause of their suspension of the importation duties? Did it arise from any great failure of the corn crops? No; but from the very same cause which had been treated with such distrust and discredit in that House—the failure of the potato crop. And yet some noble Lords believed it would have been possible for Her Majesty's Ministers, while foreign countries were so acting, to have come down to Parliament and to have asked the corn consumers of Great Britain to grant vast sums of money to relieve the distress of the Irish people, while at the same time they maintained

a duty of 18s. a quarter upon wheat. There was no alternative between that course and the suspension of the Corn Law for a time; and he would ask whether, if such a suspension had been adopted in this kingdom, it would not have been utterly impossible ever to attempt to restore the Corn Laws to their former position? It had been stated very powerfully by the noble Lord, and it had been frequently repeated by other noble Lords in the course of the debate, that the main object of a Corn Law was to prevent a country from being dependent upon foreign countries for their supplies of corn; and the permanence of the law of 1842 had been advocated on the ground that, under the operation of that law, this object had been attained. It was said that the quantity of corn produced in this country was keeping pace with the demands of the population; and a noble Friend of his stated that the importations of corn for the last twenty years had averaged 1,070,000 quarters per annum; while during the last year it had only been 308,000 quarters. From this circumstance the inference was drawn that of late years our dependence upon foreign supplies had been diminished, and that production had kept pace with the increase of the population. But they could not draw a correct inference from a single average extending over so long a period as twenty-one years. The only way of arriving at a satisfactory result was to take averages, as far as they could, for equal periods. He held in his hand a return of the importations of corn into this country from 1791 to 1840, from which it appeared that in the first ten years, from 1791 to 1800, the annual average importations were 470,000 quarters; from 1801 to 1810, 555,000 quarters; from 1811 to 1820, 429,000 quarters; from 1821 to 1830, 534,000 quarters; and from 1831 to 1840, 908,000 quarters. Now, in the five years from 1841 to 1845, partly under the operation of the new Corn Law, the average importation had been 1,807,000 quarters annually, of which 1,583,000 quarters had been admitted for consumption. In the four years from 1842 to 1845, under the new Corn Law, the average quantity annually entered for consumption has been 1,064,500 quarters. Thus it appears, that from 1791 to 1841 the largest annual importation was 908,000 quarters, while in the last four years the annual average entry for consumption has been not less than 1,064,000 quarters. It was therefore evident, upon

the face of these returns, that the importation of foreign corn was increasing, that our production has not kept pace with our demand, and that the existing law did not render us independent of supplies from other countries. Now he would ask their Lordships to consider for a single moment this question of dependence upon foreign countries. How many trades and employments of life were there with respect to which they were almost hopelessly and entirely dependent for supplies upon foreign countries? Let them take the case of the woolen trade. There was not one of their Lordships who was not dependent upon foreign supplies for the coat he wore. Nay, there was not one of their Lordships' footmen who, if they were to propose to them to become independent of foreign supplies of wool, and to wear clothes made of home wool, would not give warning to-morrow. But were they less dependent upon foreign supplies with regard to the cotton manufacture? His noble Friend had stated that the annual imports of cotton wool into this country amounted to many millions of pounds. Did not this fact show how entirely, and hopelessly, they were dependent upon foreigners for their supply? So it was with respect to silk. So it was in a great degree with respect to flax. They could not even carry on a war or fire a shot without being dependent upon foreign supply for the articles used in war. This country was dependent upon her exports and imports in a great degree for her revenue, and she was therefore dependent upon foreign nations for the maintenance of her credit. And has it been the case that in war foreign nations have stopped our supplies? From 1812 to 1814 they were at war with the United States, from which this country drew her supplies of cotton. Would it not have been death and destruction to them if the United States had stopped the supply of cotton to this country? But that had not been the case; on the contrary, in 1812 we imported 61,000,000 lbs.; in 1813, 50,000,000 lbs.; and in 1814, 53,000,000 lbs. The China war was another example, and our supplies of tea during the period of the war were as great as in any year preceding. The same principle would govern other nations with respect to corn. If we were dependent upon them for our supplies, we could get what we wanted, notwithstanding they were at war with us, as had been the case during the war with Napoleon. But then

his noble Friend said, "Look at the price!" Why, at other times the price was as high as in any of the years his noble Friend had quoted. The price, too, had no effect upon the argument, which was, that if we were at war with other countries we could not obtain supplies of corn at all. During the course of the war in which we were engaged with the whole of Europe, large imports of corn came in every year. Even in 1810 we had importations, and importations too from France itself; and he maintained that, if this country again required foreign supplies, those supplies would be got. The Government had been reproached for not stating what, in their opinion, the price of corn would be under the new system. He was not prepared to answer any demand so unreasonable, or to pronounce what the actual and specific price of corn would be. He would also respectfully ask their Lordships whether they were quite entitled to demand that information from him? Would they have been prepared in any given year, under the present system, to say what the price would be in the year following? It had been stated that, during the last twenty-one years, the average price of wheat was 57s. But what consolation was it to the farmer to be told what was the average price during a series of years, if it had been rising up and down the scale during that period? In one year the price had been 66s.; three years after 46s., in the next it was 39s., and in three years again 70s. How could their Lordships, when there had been such fluctuations under a system the boast of which was that it prevented fluctuation, ask him to name a specific price?

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND: Go to the last Bill.

THE EARL OF DALHOUSIE said, that if he did not mistake, the noble Duke had predicted precisely the same effects from the Bill of 1842, as he now prophesied from the operation of the present Bill.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND said, he never did anything of the sort. He did not vote for that Bill; but he probably should have done so if he had happened to have been in the House.

THE EARL OF DALHOUSIE thought the noble Duke had voted against that Bill; but it was immaterial for the purposes of his argument. He would go to the last Bill. The present law had proved to demonstration that the whole system of averages was a fiction. The

noble Lord (Lord Stanley) had boasted of the great fixedness and steadiness of price that had followed the law of 1842. The average price of the last year, 50s. 10d., had also been pointed to as a proof of the abundance of corn in this country. He maintained that that price of 50s. was no index whatever to the actual quantity of corn, or to the steadiness of price: it was only a proof of the inferiority of the quality. He held in his hand a return for the last twelve months of the average prices at the different returning market towns, not of the highest and lowest prices in each town, but of the highest average and the lowest average price returned in each week from the returning towns, each town giving, of course, one average price. In the first three months of that period the difference was from 15s. to 18s. In November of the same year, the difference was from 68s. to 48s.; and in the week ending the 29th, from 69s. to 38s. In January, 1846, the difference in the first week was between 69s. and 44s.; in the next, 67s. to 40s.; and in the next, 71s. to 42s.; and during other periods of the same year, the difference, instead of ranging at near 15s., as in former periods, was as much as 25s., 26s., 28s., 30s., 31s., and so on, while on the 28th of March, it was between 69s. and 32s., or a difference of 37s. In the face of these facts to talk of having equalized prices by means of this law was a gross fallacy. He had also the further evidence of the contract price from the Victualling Office for the years 1843, 1844, 1845, and 1846, to show that the official price of 50s. 10d. was no accurate index of the real supply and price. In January, 1843, the price of red wheat was 2l. 9s. 3d.; in February, 1844, 2l. 17s. 10d.; in 1845, 2l. 6s. 10d.; and in February, 1846, 3l. 5s. 5d.; and in white wheat the price in May, 1843, was 2l. 15s.; in May, 1845, 2l. 8s.; in May, 1846, 3l. 11s. He therefore altogether repudiated the idea of attempting to fix a price. With respect to the general operation the law was likely to have, he was disposed to agree with the late Earl Spencer in the opinion he had formerly expressed in that House, that everything as regarded price would remain not very far from where it was, and that the advantage of the measure would consist not in giving that 'cheap bread' for which there had been a cry, but in the steadiness of trade, and the encouragement which the agriculture of the country would derive from the increased stimulus given by it to our

manufactures. One false premise seemed to lie at the foundation of all the arguments on this question—it was, that there would be an enormous importation of foreign grain under this measure. Whence was this supply to come? It seemed to be generally assumed that Germany, Denmark, Poland, Russia, some Austrian provinces, and the United States, were the countries from which the grain was to come. But noble Lords who entertained those apprehensions never attempted to state in what quantities this grain would come, and where it was to come from. He maintained that no such quantities as were anticipated could or would come. Mr. Jacobs, in 1828, visited the countries in the north of Europe, by order of the Government, and reported that they could not send to this country a larger quantity than they then sent. In 1842, another gentleman was sent to the same countries to make the same inquiries; the result was embodied in the consular returns, and it was there stated that the whole average amount which those countries could send to this country was 2,200,000 quarters of grain. There was nothing whatever to contradict, not the general assertion, but the facts stated by that gentleman, to show that no great quantity could be imported into this country at all. He (the Earl of Dalhousie) perfectly erred the statement of the noble Lord opposite as to the virgin soil and fertile plains to be found in various countries in Europe. He did not dispute that there were millions on millions of acres on which corn might be raised; but what was their value if the corn was not attainable? As well might noble Lords point to the plains of South America, where thousands upon thousands of cattle were roaming about, and argue that under the new law these thousands and thousands would be imported here. There was no doubt of the capacity of those countries which were so dreaded; there was no doubt of the abundance; but distance rendered the capacity and the abundance unavailable. He would not fatigue their Lordships with calculations as to trade and carrying charges. With regard to the produce of Germany, and of Hungary, which found an exit northward, it went by rivers, which in winter were frozen, and in summer were during long periods dried up for navigation. That which found an exit southward was transported in bullock-carts a distance of 250 miles by a very tedious mode of conveyance, raising the charges to a very

high amount. So that though in those countries the produce was large it was totally useless. The same was the case with Spain: no country could be more fertile; but though corn could be got at a very moderate rate in Castile, yet before it could be brought to the markets, as mentioned in Mr. Jacobs's report, the price it would have reached rendered it more profitable for consumers to obtain their supply from America. In the continental countries of which so much was said, cultivation was carried on by serfs; neither they nor their landlords had means for improving agriculture; their implements were of the rudest kind; and he did venture to think, that nothing had been stated by any noble Lord to invalidate the testimony of the official documents long since laid on the Table, to the fact that the quantities of corn introduced from those countries would be extremely limited, and that the price at which they could be brought was above anything that would yield such a return as to encourage importation. Their Lordships had heard it stated the other evening, that 5,000,000 of quarters could, in three years, be brought into this country, purchased at Galatz, where the corn was produced at a price of 14s., and of excellent quality. He would not read letters to their Lordships, but he would lay before them documents infinitely more authoritative, namely, actual bills of sale. He held three of these in his hand in reference to cargoes of grain imported from Galatz. They were purchased in the abundant year, 1844. They were not detained in warehouse, yet on each transaction there was a loss to a very great extent. They were sold on account of Mr. R. Gardner, Manchester. The first was purchased on July 29, 1844, and the price paid was not 14s., but 21s. and 23s. 9d. per quarter. They were sold in bond on October 25, and the balance of loss was 10s. 4d. per quarter. Another cargo, purchased in June, 1844, for 23s. 9d., was sold on October 12, and the balance of loss was 14s. 11d. per quarter. A third cargo purchased about the same time with the others for 23s. 9d. per quarter, was sold after a similar interval, when the balance of loss was 12s. 3d. per quarter. There were the invoices sent to him by a gentleman of high respectability; but they bore evidence on their face of the respectability of the parties and the transaction itself, for the agents in the transaction were Messrs.

Baring Brothers. But supposing there was a large importation, it was not an entire surplus. The population was increasing, and it was necessary to find increasing supplies. And abroad the same necessity would be felt. [Lord ASHBURTON observed, they did not consume wheat abroad.] If they grew for themselves, they could not grow wheat to send it here. In the course of late years the population of the different countries which were regarded with such apprehensions had greatly increased. Such was the case in Russia, Norway, the German States, and all the others. The population of Prussia had increased from 12,000,000, in 1825, to 15,000,000, in 1843. In Austria it increased, between 1820 and 1840, from 30,000,000 to 37,000,000. In Russia from 56,000,000, in 1827, to 59,000,000, in 1837. In France, from 31,000,000, in 1826, to 35,000,000, in 1845. But there was another consideration which had not been fully dwelt upon in this debate with the weight that ought to be attributed to it, and that was, the increase of our own population. There had been a total failure of proof to show that they could adapt fresh land to meet the wants of the increased population, or that they could increase the produce of that land for the same purpose. The Sanitary Report (p. 330) says—

“ It may be of interest to observe, that as the whole population grows in age, the annual increase in numbers may be deemed to be equivalent to an annual increase of numbers of the average ages of the community. If they were maintained on the existing average of territory to the population in England, the additional numbers would require an annual extension of one fifty-seventh of the present territory of Great Britain, possessing the average extent of roads, commons, hills, and unproductive land. The extent of new territory required annually would form a county larger than Surrey, or Leicester, or Nottingham, or Hereford, or Cambridge, and nearly as large as Warwick.”

“ To feed the annually increased population, supposing it to consume the same proportions of meat that is consumed by the population of Manchester and its vicinity, (a consumption which appears to me to be below the average of the consumption in the metropolis,) the influx of 230,000 of new population will require for their consumption an annual increase of 27,327 head of cattle, 70,319 sheep, 64,715 lambs, and 7,104 calves, to raise which an annual increase of 81,000 acres of good pasture land would be required.”

In the last thirty years there had been an increase of 15 per cent. in the population in each duennial period. Did their Lordships realize the fact that, since this Bill, now under considera-

tion, was introduced to Parliament, there were 100,000 and upwards more to feed? Was it in their power to increase the produce of the country in the same proportion? No proof of that had ever been attempted. He did not believe that that immense increase of supply would take place; but if it did, would it be more than sufficient to meet the increase of population that was constantly going on? Before he left this part of the subject, he would direct their Lordships' attention to the question of supply from the United States. He knew that it was usual to treat the United States as an inexhaustible source of food. Such, however, was not the experience of past years, nor was it the opinion in the United States themselves. The wheat producing States were limited to certain districts of country—they were all in the extreme west; and, consequently, whatever was produced there could not reach this country from their own ports except at a large charge. Let them trace what had been the increase of supply and of export in that country for a considerable number of years. He had the official tables of the States before him for the period from 1791 to 1840; and, although it appeared that the increase in produce had been enormous, as was admitted, yet the increase of population had been concurrent; and it appeared that now they had for export a smaller amount than they had fifty years ago. In 1790 the population was 3,900,000, and the wheat exported to foreign countries amounted to 4,750,000 bushels, being 28 per cent. of the whole produce. In 1810 the population had risen to 7,000,000, and the amount of wheat exported was 4,000,000 of bushels, being 14½ per cent. of the whole produce. In 1820 the population was 9,600,000; the export of wheat, 5,900,000 bushels, being 15½ per cent. of the whole produce. In 1840 the population had increased to 17,000,000, and the amount of wheat exported was only 11,000,000 of bushels, or 14 per cent. of the whole produce, that is to say, only one-half what it was formerly. That was the amount of wheat exported by the United States; and yet they were not without markets to encourage export during that time, for the markets of Cuba, of our own West Indies, and of South America, were thrown open to them. Their Lordships would see, then, that, with the increase of population that was going on in the United States, the increase of produce would be

required at home, and there would be nothing like the enormous exportation that was expected from them into this country. Again, the prices of New York ruled at about 40s.; and in addition to that, there would be the cost of carriage before it could reach this country; so that, as with respect to the Continent, the expectation of an enormous importation was not borne out by facts. But then it was said, "Why try this experiment in this great country?" He answered, it was not now tried for the first time. It had been tried here before, and had perfectly succeeded; for from 1766 to 1791, we had practically an entirely free trade in corn. No doubt taxation at that time was not so heavy as now; but it was distinctly stated by writers of that period, that it did weigh heavily upon labour here as compared with labour on the Continent. At that time, we not only could import corn free here, we could grow corn cheap enough to export it to foreign countries; and what was the case in those years? Was the agriculture of the country in a depressed condition? By no means. On the contrary, large quantities of land were taken into cultivation. From 1766 to 1769, 300,000 acres were taken in; afterwards, from 1769 to 1791, other large quantities. Neither was it by the influence of high prices that this additional cultivation took place, for prices at that time ruled extremely low, varying on the average of quinquennial periods, from 1843 to 1846. In like manner they had tried it in other parts near their own doors. In Jersey they had had a free trade in corn, and the prices had ruled a little, if at all, lower than prices here. He knew that noble Lords would turn round and ask if they did not increase the supply, and did not anticipate a diminution of prices, why they proposed this change? The Government did not propose it because it would reduce prices, but because it would give a stimulus to trade, and set in motion the industry of this country, and so provide the fullest means for agricultural employment. The noble Duke shook his head; but if the activity of trade in manufacturing districts was not the most direct encouragement to agriculture, why was it that such perpetual reference was made to them? He remembered last year, when he received deputations with respect to the railways, that with respect to each of the railways, whether in the centre or from the sides of this country, the principal point on which noble Lords invariably

dwelt was the advantages it would afford for an easy and rapid access to agricultural produce to the manufacturing districts. In the districts of Derbyshire this benefit was to be the access to Manchester; in the districts of Lincolnshire it was still the access to manufacturing population; in Argyll and Dumfries it was an easy access to Fleetwood, and so to the manufacturing districts; and if in Ireland, there was still the same burden of the song, the access was to be to some port whence they could reach Liverpool, and so the same manufacturing districts in England. Why was there this yearning after the manufacturing districts? Because the manufacturing districts were the great markets for the agricultural. Every loom they stopped in Manchester stopped a plough in some agricultural part of the country. There could not be a closer connexion between all these districts than was shown by the reports of Committees and the statements of Members of Parliament, that unless the manufacturing interests were in a state of prosperity and employment, the agricultural interest would be in a state of depression, and that whatever promoted a demand in the manufacturing districts acted as a stimulus in the agricultural districts also; and, therefore, in addition to the wish to impose no restriction on the free importation of the food of the people, the Government were convinced that this measure would be attended with none but good results to all classes, and would confer equal benefits on all districts. Hence it was that Her Majesty's Government ventured to propose it to their Lordships' attention. The noble Baron near him (Lord Ashburton) had adverted to the colonial interests, and had asked whether they had anticipated the effect of this alteration of policy on the Colonies; and he asked of what use were the Colonies if they did not afford a protected market for our manufactures? He (the Earl of Dalhousie) ventured to think that the Colonies would be of advantage to us even if there were not a compulsory market. But the question raised by the noble Lord was no longer open; the colonial system, to which he referred, had been broken down long ago. In the West India Colonies it was only in 1842 that under the presidency of his noble Friend the late Secretary of the Colonies there was a free importation of many articles which previously came from Canada, and had since come from America; and in other Colonies

the maximum rate of differential duties on all articles, with few exceptions, such as tobacco, has been only seven per cent., which was nothing as compared with the rates which used to be in existence under the old colonial system. So far from forcing upon the Colonies these protective duties, the constant struggle of this country had been to prevent the Colonies from imposing greater differential duties than this country approved. Therefore, the colonial system, as it used to be called, existed no longer. What, then, was the state of facts as to the alteration they were about to make? He thought that if his noble Friend the late Secretary for the Colonies were in his place, he would bear him out in saying that the only articles on which the change would act injuriously were timber and corn; and of corn there was the most grievous complaint. His noble Friend said that they were about to ruin the political connexion, and the whole of the navigation interests of the Colonies, if this measure passed. But with respect to corn, what was the amount of the carrying trade? The loss would apply only to the corn of the United States, which, by being ground into flour in Canada, acquired the character of colonial produce, and was admitted at 1s. duty, and to the corn the produce of Canada herself. He held in his hand a return of the American corn thus brought through Canada; and from the 11th of October, 1843, to the 5th of January, 1844, the quantity was 618 quarters; from the 5th of January, 1844, to the 5th of January, 1845, it was 43,860 quarters; and for the year ending the 5th of January, 1846, it was only 24,490 quarters. Inasmuch as 24,000 quarters was the quantity imported by Canada in the course of the year, it must be obvious, that anything affecting such an amount could produce no very serious result. But some stress had been laid upon the despatch received from Lord Cathcart, which was dated the 28th of January, 1846. Now that despatch did not contain, by any means, the most recent intelligence received from that Colony. Lord Cathcart, in writing that despatch, stated that he wished to lay before Her Majesty's Ministers the views entertained by the Executive Government of Canada, and that he wrote in great haste in order to save the post. That statement surely showed very clearly that the opinions conveyed in that despatch had not been very

deliberately formed. There had, however, since that time, been a despatch received in this country from Canada, dated the 26th of March last, that was written after much deliberation, and after the House of Assembly had calmly discussed and considered the intended measure which was now before their Lordships; and had agreed to an Address to the Crown, the sum and substance of which was, that they wished the duty to which they were liable of 1s. on every quarter of grain, should be changed into 1d.—that what was considered in this country a nominal duty of 1s. should be changed into that which they really considered to be a nominal duty, namely, 1d. In their address, which had been printed, and was now on the Table of the House, they set forth that as one of the just claims of the province. Now, he would ask their Lordships if that could be said to bear any appearance of alarm? It was also not unimportant that he should call the attention of their Lordships to the views entertained on this subject, and expressed in the House of Assembly by the leader of each of the two parties. Colonel Prince, the leader of the Ministerial party, stated that he had unbounded confidence in the loyalty of the inhabitants of the province, in their devotion to the mother country, and in their desire to preserve their connexion with it; and he confessed that he did not view the proposition of Her Majesty's Government with any feelings of alarm—he saw no cause whatever why they should despair; and that, for his part, he had always been a supporter of free trade. Mr. Baldwin, the leader of the Opposition party, said that they wanted no foreign interference; that they were proud of the connexion which subsisted between Canada and the mother country; and he believed that the liberal principles which were springing up at home would be no injury to the province, and that though England had formerly treated Canada in the manner that a stepmother treats the family over which she is placed, yet now he rejoiced to say that Canada began to receive better treatment at the hands of the mother country; and that there seemed to exist in England no disposition to oppress her Colonies. On these points, then, it was evident that the leaders of the two parties were agreed. He hoped that the House would now permit him to mention two other Colonies; he meant Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. In the former of these, when a proposition was made for improving the defences of the Colony,

the colonists at once offered to place at the disposal of the Governor the whole of the income of the Colony for the purposes of defence should it be needed; and in New Brunswick it was proposed that, in addition to a sum of 12,000*l.* which had been assigned for the purposes of defence, the whole ordinary revenue of the country should be taken for that purpose also, in order that their connexion with the mother country should be maintained in its fullest and most perfect condition. Although he had never held any office connected with these Colonies, yet he had long resided in them, and he possessed connexions and means of information which enabled him to speak upon these points with some confidence. He could confidently say, with respect to them, that there was no want of loyalty in those quarters: for their attachment to the mother country, he could safely pledge his head—if such a pledge were good for anything—he entertained not a shadow of doubt, that if the necessity should ever come, those Colonies would be, one and all, loyally prodigal of their blood, as they had ever been generously profuse in the offer of their treasure. He had touched briefly upon various points, and even in that brief way not upon as many as he should have wished to notice, feeling that as they had devoted so many hours to the discussion of this question, and that at the time at which he spoke, and in the exhausted state of the House, he ought not to take up much more of their time; but there was one point on which he did not wish to remain altogether silent: he referred to the charges of treachery which had been brought against the Government with reference to their present measure. He would admit that it would have been infinitely better if the proposal of the measures now before them had come from another quarter; and he believed every one of his noble Friends around him would echo him in saying that they had witnessed with sincere regret the unsuccessful attempt made by the noble Lords opposite to form a Government by which those measures might have been proposed. When, however, that attempt proved unsuccessful, when the servants of the Crown were called upon to give effect to their own convictions, he maintained the treachery would have been in taking any course different from that which they had taken. Their Lordships might accuse Her Majesty's servants of change of opinion—they might charge them with vacillation—they

might arraign them for these faults at the bar of public opinion; but even were all this granted, their Lordships would not be justified in using the word "treachery." No man rated higher than he did the necessity of governing such a country as this by party; he recognised as fully as could any man the obligations of party; but he recognised higher obligations still. He had not the honour of a seat in the Cabinet at the time a decision on these measures was come to; but he was not on that account desirous of repudiating the responsibility of adopting them. He would not say what course, had he been of that Cabinet, he would have taken; but he could not find any proportionate degree of responsibility between the First Minister of the Crown, who originated a measure, and his Colleagues in subordinate capacities by whom that measure had been approved: he recognised no such distinction of responsibility: and if it were ever his fate to be placed as Member of a Government, with the alternative such as that placed before his right hon. Friend before him, either of adhering to a party, or giving effect to a faithful and solemn conviction, he should pursue the course pursued by that Minister. He was bound to adhere to his party, he was still more closely bound to do his duty. It were a thousand times better that he should walk the earth branded as a traitor to his party, than that he should live with the consciousness, which under such circumstances would scorch his heart, of having been, if not in the eye of the law, at least in the court of conscience, a traitor to the Sovereign he was bound to advise, a traitor to the responsibility imposed upon him. He heartily hoped he might never be placed in such a position; but if it ever were his lot, he would meet the obloquy, he would submit to the penalty, but he would give true counsel to the Sovereign he served, and would act for the best interests of the people committed to that Sovereign's care. And then, when he had so done, although he might bow his head before the indignation of his party, he should stand upright before a higher power. One word he would add in reminding their Lordships of the consequences of a rejection of this measure, and of the blessings which would arise from an instant adoption of it. He did not wish to be understood as appealing to their fears; he knew that fear would be the last human passion which could affect

the conduct of the House of Peers; but he would appeal to their prudence—he would appeal to their justice; he appealed to their prudence that they would not, without earnest deliberation, reject a measure which came to them backed by the recommendation of a large majority of the representatives of the people; and he appealed to their justice that they would not fixedly resolve on permanently maintaining a fiscal policy, the effect of which was, and always must be, to inflict an injury upon the many for the benefit of the few. He adjured them to search closely their hearts before they decided; he adjured them to test closely the arguments offered for such a maintenance; he entreated them to dismiss prejudices, if any such there were, and to satisfy themselves that, when they acted they acted solely and only for the public weal. Should they so act, he awaited confidently the result of their deliberations. He truly believed that if they adopted this measure, they would, ere long, look back with marvel at the time when they doubted what would be its effects; and he was equally certain they would look back with satisfaction to the assent which they had given. They would look back with satisfaction, because they would then feel they had done all that in them lay to remove a reproach from the legislation of their country—the reproach that it added bitterness to the bitter cup of adversity. They would feel that they had done all that in them lay to smooth for the poor their rugged path; that they had done all that in them lay to mitigate the primeval curse, and to soothe the fate of those whose hard lot it was to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow.

THE DUKE OF BEAUFORT rose amid loud cries for a division, and said he felt some apology was necessary for rising to address their Lordships at so late an hour of the night. He would not detain them long; but at the same time he felt that he would not be discharging his duty if he did not detain them a few moments while he answered some of the arguments that had been adduced in favour of the measure. He objected to this measure, principally on two grounds. In the first place, he objected to it because it was an impolitic measure, and because it was an unjust measure—as he could not consent to see this country left dependent for its supply of food upon foreign nations. And, in the second place, he saw great objections to it, on account of the quarter from which it

emanated. If the measure had been brought forward by noble Lords who sat on the other side of the House, his objections to it would not have been quite so great as they were. The noble Earl opposite (the Earl of Clarendon), to whose ability he was ready to pay every tribute, and whom he always listened to with respect, had said, "Did they suppose that corn was to be the only thing which the Prime Minister was not to touch?" To this he could only reply, that they had always had an assurance that corn should not be touched. He perfectly well remembered that he had, when the Tariff Bill of a former Session was introduced, entertained serious objections to that measure, and gone so far as to remonstrate against it; but he was told at the same time that he knew nothing at all about it—and that he ought to wait a little, when he would see that his coats and shoes, gloves, and so forth, would be much cheaper; and moreover to rest satisfied that corn would never be touched. He could not, however, discover that any of these things were any cheaper. His noble Friend had stated in the course of his speech, that this was not a tenants' but a landlords' question; but on this head, he wished to state a fact or two personal to himself. He happened to possess an estate in Wales, of which the rental was about 4,000*l.* a year, and upon which there were eighty tenants. Their Lordships would therefore at once perceive that their holdings must of necessity be small, and that if this measure passed into a law, these tenants must descend to the lowest state of labourers. He should, no doubt, be told to throw his farms together and let them in a different manner and in larger portions; "but," my Lords, (said the noble Duke,) "these tenants and their forefathers have lived under my ancestors and myself for many generations. I have, in one parish on this estate, two small farms which are let to one family, members of which have held under my own for no less than 350 years—and another family has held under us for 450 years. And can I send these men to foreign countries—or turn them out to become manufacturers—or to seek their living in the best way they can? My Lords, I had rather cut off my right arm than do any of these things; and proud as I may be of any honours I may possess as a Member of your Lordships House, of that tenantry I am prouder still. And yet my Lords, if this Bill passes into a law, this body of men are to be got rid of, and in the same manner

would it act upon the 600,000 small farmers in England, and on nearly the same numbers in Ireland." He was sure that the noble Earl opposite (the Earl of Clarendon) was too proud of the name he bore—too proud of the memory of his distinguished ancestors—to be capable of wishing anything of this sort. He could not, however, say the same of others, he feared—at least so far as was to be judged by what they themselves said. One word more before he sat down, as to why he considered this was a tenants' question; and not only that, but why he also thought the tenant farmers themselves so considered it. His noble and learned Friend (Lord Brougham) did not think so; and, though he much admired his eloquence—for *nilhil tetigit quod non ornarit*—he could not agree with him in that opinion. But allow him to ask this question: if the tenant farmers did not think this a tenants' question, how was it that, at the late election for South Nottinghamshire, they returned the hon. Gentleman (Mr. Hildyard) who now represented that division of that county?—how happened it that they, by their own unaided exertions—by themselves alone—returned him as their Member, and free of expense, and in the place of a Cabinet Minister? He could inform their Lordships, also, that he was acquainted with another county in which committees of farmers were now formed for the purpose of opposing the return of another Cabinet Minister, who had declared his intention of standing again. Again, he had himself been asked by the tenant farmers in his own neighbourhood to come to the recent great meeting at Willis's Rooms—a meeting which had been attended by farmers from the east, from the west, from the north, and from the south—a meeting, at which even from East Lothian a deputation was present. His answer was, that he would go; and when he asked them (they were, many of them, members of the yeomanry corps of the district, which was at that time on duty) what arrangements they had made for going, they said they had agreed to go in bodies of two or three from each troop, because, if all were to go who were anxious to go, the whole regiment would attend the meeting. And yet his noble and learned Friend said that the opinions of the tenant farmers was the other way. The noble Duke then concluded by observing, that it was with very great regret that he separated from noble Lords with whom he had so long

been on terms of intimacy and friendship, and with whose principles he had hitherto agreed; and above all, he felt pain in differing from his noble Friend the noble Duke (the Duke of Wellington) behind him, to whom he was bound by so many ties, and whose name must ever be one of the highest ornaments that adorned the history of this country, and which now he deeply regretted to see associated with a measure which, in his conscience, he believed to be fraught with evil and danger to this kingdom.

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON: My Lords, I cannot allow this question for the second reading of this Bill to be put to your Lordships, without addressing to you a few words on the vote you are about to give. I am aware, my Lords, that I address you on this occasion under many disadvantages. I address your Lordships under the disadvantage of appearing here as a Minister of the Crown, to press this measure upon your adoption, knowing at the same time how disagreeable it is to many of you with whom I have constantly acted in political life, with whom I have long lived in intimacy and friendship with the utmost satisfaction to myself—on whose good opinion I have ever relied, and, I am happy to say, whose good opinion it has been my fortune hitherto to have enjoyed in no small degree. My Lords, I have already in this House adverted to the circumstances which gave rise to this measure. My Lords, in the month of December last, I felt myself bound, by my duty to my Sovereign, not to withhold my assistance from the Government—not to decline to resume my seat in Her Majesty's Councils—not to refuse to give my assistance to the Government of my right hon. Friend (Sir R. Peel)—knowing as I did, at the time, that my right hon. Friend could not do otherwise than propose to Parliament a measure of this description—nay, more, my Lords, this very measure—for this is the very measure which my right hon. Friend stated to the Cabinet prior to their resignation in the month I have referred to. My Lords, it is not necessary that I should say more upon that subject. I am aware that I address your Lordships at present with all your prejudices against me for having adopted the course I then took—a course which, however little I may be able to justify it to your Lordships, I considered myself bound to take, and which, if it were to be again adopted to-morrow, I should take again.

I am in Her Majesty's service—bound to Her Majesty and to the Sovereigns of this country by considerations of gratitude of which it is not necessary that I should say more to your Lordships. It may be true, my Lords, and it is true, that in such circumstances I ought to have no relation with party, and that party ought not to rely upon me. Be it so, my Lords—be it so, if you think proper: I have stated to you the motives on which I have acted—I am satisfied with those motives myself—and I should be exceedingly concerned if any dissatisfaction respecting them remained in the mind of any of your Lordships. I am aware that I have never had any claim to the confidence which you have all reposed in me for a considerable number of years. Circumstances have given it to me; in some cases the confidence of the Crown, and in others the zeal with which I have endeavoured to serve your Lordships, to promote your Lordships' views, and my desire to facilitate your business in this House; and I shall lament the breaking up of that confidence in public life. But, my Lords, I will not omit, even on this night—probably the last on which I shall ever venture to address to you any advice again—I will not omit to give you my counsel with respect to the vote you ought to give on this occasion. My noble Friend (Lord Stanley), whose absence on this occasion I much lament, urged you, and in the strongest manner, to vote against this measure; and he told you, in terms which I cannot attempt to imitate, that it was your duty to step in and protect the people of this country from rash and inconsiderate measures passed by the other House of Parliament, and which, in his opinion, were inconsistent with the views and opinions of the people themselves. My Lords, there is no doubt whatever that it is your duty to consider all the measures which are brought before you, and that it is your right to vote in regard to those measures as you think proper; and, most particularly, it is your duty to vote against those that appear to be rash and inconsiderate; but, my Lords, I beg leave to point out to your Lordships that it is also your duty to consider well the consequences of any vote you give on any subject—to consider well the situation in which you place this House—nay, my Lords, that it is the duty of every one of you to place himself in the situation of this House, to ponder well the consequences of his vote, and all the circum-

stances attending it, and the situation, I repeat, in which this House would be placed if it should adopt the vote which he himself is about to give. This, indeed, has been the line of conduct pursued by this House before. I myself once prevailed upon this House to vote for a measure on which it had pronounced positive opinions by former votes; and persuaded it subsequently to take a course different from that which it had pursued on previous occasions, upon the same subject. My Lords, I now ask you to look a little at the measure in respect of which you are going to give your votes this night—to look at the way in which it comes before you, and to consider the consequences likely to follow your rejection—if you do reject it—of this Bill. This measure, my Lords, was recommended by the Speech from the Throne, and it has been passed by a majority of the House of Commons, consisting of more than half the Members of that House. But my noble Friend said that that vote is inconsistent with the original vote given by the same House of Commons on this same question, and inconsistent with the supposed views of the constituents by whom they were elected. But, my Lords, I think that is not a subject which this House can take into its consideration—for, first, we can have no accurate knowledge of the fact; and, secondly, whether it be the fact or not, this we know, that it is the House of Commons from which this Bill comes to us. We know by the Votes that it has passed by a majority of the House of Commons; we know that it is recommended by the Crown; and we know that, if we should reject this Bill, it is a Bill which has been agreed to by the other two branches of the Legislature; and that the House of Lords stands alone in rejecting this measure. Now that, my Lords, is a situation in which I beg to remind your Lordships, I have frequently stated you ought not to stand; it is a position in which you cannot stand, because you are entirely powerless; without the House of Commons and the Crown, the House of Lords can do nothing. You have vast influence on public opinion; you may have great confidence in your own principles; but without the Crown or the House of Commons you can do nothing—till the connexion with the Crown and the House of Commons is revived, there is an end of the functions of the House of Lords. But I will take your Lordships a step further,

and let you see what will be the immediate consequences of rejecting this Bill. It appears very clear, that whatever may be the result of this Bill in this House, the object I had in view in resuming my seat in Her Majesty's Councils will not be attained. I conclude that another Government will be formed; but whether another Government is formed or not, let me ask, do your Lordships suppose that you will not have this very same measure brought before you by the next Administration which can be formed? And do your Lordships mean to reject the measure a second time? Do you mean the country to go on in the discussion of this measure two or three months longer? But the object of the noble Duke and of the noble Lords who have addressed the House against this Bill is, that Parliament should be dissolved—that the country should have the opportunity of considering the question, and of returning other representatives; and that it may be seen whether or not the new House of Commons would agree to this measure. Now, really, if your Lordships have so much confidence, as you appear to have, in the result of other elections and in the exercise of public opinion on this question, I think that you might venture to rely upon the elections which must occur, according to the common course of law, in the course of a twelvemonth from this time; and that you might leave it to the Parliament thus elected to consider the course which it will take on the expiration of the term of the Bill now before you; for that Bill is to last only till the year 1849. I think your Lordships might trust to that Parliament to take the matter into consideration at that time, without interfering with the prerogative of the Crown, by compelling the Queen to dissolve Parliament as the immediate consequence of the rejection of the present measure. Your Lordships, therefore, have now the option of immediately accepting this Bill, reserving it to another Parliament to pass or reject it again, if again the question should be brought forward, or of rejecting the Bill now, and obtaining a fresh election, of which you are so desirous: your Lordships have that choice—you may reject the Bill now, or you may appeal again to the new Parliament to confirm or reject it, at the time when its operation will cease, in the year 1849.

The question was then put that “now” stand part of the Motion?

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Newcastle	Stanhope
Buckingham	Pomfret
Cleveland	Asburnham
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Salisbury	Guilford
Downshire	Hardwicke
Ely	Delawarr
Exeter	Mansfield
Westmeath	Beverley
EARLS.	Carnarvon
Huntingdon	Cadogan
Winchilea	Malmesbury
Chesterfield	Egmont
Sandwich	Longford
Cardigan	Enniskillen
Abingdon	Wicklow

Lucan
Wilton
Limerick
Clancarty
Powis
Nelson
Charleville
Manvers
Oxford
Lonsdale
Harewood
Brownlow
Bradford
Sheffield
Eldon
Falmouth
Somers
Stradbroke
Cawdor
Muester
Ranfurly

VISCOUNTS.

Hereford
Maynard
Strangford
Middleton
Gage
Doneraile
St. Vincent
Sidmouth
Lorton
Lake
Exmouth
Beresford
Combermere
Canterbury
Ponsonby
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BISHOPS.

Winchester
Bangor
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Gloucester
Exeter
Chichester

LORDS.

Stanley
De Ros
Hastings
Clinton
Beaumont
Willoughby de Broke
St. John
Saltoun
Polwarth
Sondea
Boston
Hawke
Walsingham
Southampton
Grantley
Berwick
Sherborne
Kenyon
Braybrooke
Carrington
Hayning
Bolton
Northwick
Lifford
Clonbrock
Crofton
Redesdale
Colechester
Rayleigh
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Tenterden
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Wynford
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Abinger
Ashburton
De Freyne

Proxies.

DUKE.
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KARLS.
Shrewsbury
Poulett
Moray
Balcarres
Seafield
Ferrers
Tankerville
Macclesfield
Waldegrave
Hechester
Digby
Shannon
Roden
Mount Cashel
Mayo
Erne
Donoughmore
Onslow
Beauchamp

Glengall
Yarborough
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VISCOUNTS.
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Alvanley
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BISHOPS.
St. Asaph
Bath and Wells

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Thursday, June 4, 1846.

CUSTOMS DUTIES BILL—SECOND READING.

THE EARL OF DALHOUSIE proceeded to move the Second Reading of the Customs Duties Bill, and said that the Bill was made up of details, which he would not trouble their Lordships by entering largely into; but would content himself with stating generally the reasons which induced Her Majesty's Government to submit the Bill to the consideration of the Legislature. In 1842, one of the first acts of Her Majesty's Government was to submit a proposal to the Legislature for a reconsideration of the Customs laws, and for a complete revision of the Tariff, with a view to the removal of prohibitory, and the relaxation of protective duties. That was not the first adoption of the principle; it was only following in the wake of that course of commercial legislation commenced twenty years before, which had been gradually advancing in the direction the Legislature was now called upon to take. To go no further back than 1819, considerable reductions were then made in the duties on the import of several foreign articles; and between 1819 and 1826 still more numerous and important changes of the same character were made. There were great alterations even in the navigation laws, and in our colonial commercial policy; large reductions were made in the case of almost all the principal articles of import into this country, and with respect to some of them the trade was almost thrown open. It was found, however, in 1842, that there was still a mass of duties imposed upon different articles, regulated apparently by no one pervading principle; and that, in fact, no recognised principle pervaded our system of commercial taxation. Under the superintendence of the noble President of the Board of Control (the Earl of Ripon), and the present Secretary for the Colonies (Mr. Gladstone), those articles were classified, and the charges regulated as far as possible upon a fixed scale—the principles applied to the Tariff being, that as far as possible duties upon raw materials should be removed; that articles wholly manufactured should be subjected to a duty of 20 per cent.; and that those partially manufactured should be subjected to a duty of 10

Earl Belhaven paired (for the Bill) with the Earl of Lauderdale (against it).

Hill read 2^a. accordingly.

House adjourned.

per cent. A list of the principal articles with regard to which changes were then made, had recently been laid on the Table; they amounted to nearly 600 in number; and reductions were made in duties which reached to upwards of 1,300,000*l.* In the following year, 1843, still further reductions were made upon seven different articles; in 1844, four others of great importance, and involving large amounts of revenue, were included in the reduction; and, in 1845, the duties were proposed to be reduced on 112 articles, and entirely repealed on 54 of them. By these alterations very large reductions were made from articles from which we derived a large revenue; and a very large number of articles were expunged from it, as far as duties were concerned, although left for the purposes of registration, and that the resources of the country might be ascertained. These changes, especially those of 1842, were introduced in the firm belief that the removal of the duties on the raw material of manufactures, and the reduction of duties on manufactured goods, while beneficial to the consumer, would also give a stimulus to trade, which would tend directly to the benefit of commerce, and in the end leave the revenue very little, if at all, a sufferer by the change; and the mention of a very few of the articles would show how this anticipation was fulfilled. In 1842, and again in 1844, very large reductions were made in the duty upon coffee, the duty on the import of foreign coffee having been reduced in the former year from 15*d.* per lb. to 8*d.*, and on colonial coffee to 4*d.* He would state the amount entered for consumption three years subsequent to the reduction:

In 1843 the amount was	...	30,000,000 lbs.
1844	...	31,300,000 "
1845	...	34,300,000 "

This was only the amount entered for consumption; it did not include the amount imported, and afterwards re-exported. In 1844, a large reduction was made in the duty on sugar. He did not intend to enter into the sugar question then, as that article would form the subject of separate consideration on another occasion. He would only just state the effect of the reduction upon the consumption:—

In 1843 the amount was	...	4,000,000 cwt.
1844	...	4,100,000 "
1845	...	4,880,000 "

He wished particularly to draw attention to the effect of reduction on this article; for

an increase in the consumption of sugar tended to an increase in the consumption of other articles on which the duty had not been reduced. Accordingly, although there was no reduction in the duty on tea, the quantity entered for consumption had increased largely.

In 1843 the amount was	...	40,000,000 lbs.
1844	...	41,000,000 "
1845	...	44,100,000 "

In the year 1844 a similar reduction took place on currants, which, however insignificant it might appear, was an article of great importance to the comfort of the people, which brought a considerable sum to the revenue.

In 1843 the amount entered was	...	254,000 cwt.
1845	...	235,000 "
1840	...	309,000 "

With respect to wool. In 1843 the amount entered was 48,000,000 lbs.; and in 1845, after the reduction in the duty took place, the amount entered was 74,000,000 lbs. Flax had also experienced similar results. In many material objects of consumption a similar large reduction had taken place with the same results, as, for instance, in the raw material of the linen manufacture, in hemp, in indigo, in logwood, and in various dyeing materials. The Paper which he held in his hand would show their Lordships that in all those articles upon which this reduction had taken place, the anticipations which had been previously formed of an increase in the imports and the consumption were fully realized. But it was not, he needed not to remind their Lordships, merely to the import of the particular articles that they were to look for the effect of the reductions that had taken place; for though the import of any given article might not, at any particular time, have materially increased, still the stimulus which was given to trade by the impetus afforded by a reduction of duty in some one particular branch of industry, produced a movement through the whole, the effect of which was shown on the general exports and imports of the country. Accordingly, their Lordships would find, on looking at the account of the imports for the last four years, that there had been a very large increase in their official value. The official value of the imports, exclusive of corn, amounted—

In 1841	...	to	...	£59,000,000
1842	...	...	...	59,000,000
1843	...	...	...	68,000,000
1844	...	...	...	71,000,000
1845	...	...	...	82,000,000

The same effect was observable under perhaps the most important head, viz., the exports. The total real or declared value of British and Irish manufactured articles in the same period, according to the same returns, was—

In 1840	...	...	...	£51,000,000
1841	...	...	...	51,600,000
1842	...	...	...	47,300,000
1843	...	...	...	52,000,000
1844	...	...	...	58,000,000
1845	...	...	...	60,000,000

showing an increase since 1841 from 51,000,000 to 60,000,000 in 1845. As far, therefore, as regarded the imports and exports of the country, there was undoubted proof that the reduction of the duties upon the various articles included in the Tariff, had been attended with the most complete success. The effect on the revenue—not on the general revenue, but on the particular revenue derived from these articles—was not less striking. In 1842, as their Lordships were aware, there had been reductions made in the customs duties of this country to the extent of 1,338,000*l.* The net produce of the customs duties in that year was 19,643,000*l.*, exclusive of the duty on corn, notwithstanding this reduction. In 1843, there was a further reduction, equivalent to 171,000*l.*, and yet the customs revenue for that year amounted to 20,200,000*l.* In 1844 there was a still further reduction to the extent of 286,000*l.*—and in 1845 a reduction to the extent of 2,418,000*l.*—a total of about 2,700,000*l.*, and yet the customs duties, which amounted in 1844 to 21,000,000*l.*, amounted in 1845 to 19,800,000*l.* This showed that the reduction of duties had not been followed by a corresponding deficiency in the revenue; the actual deficit being only 1,200,000*l.*, whereas the reduction was 2,700,000*l.* The sum of the whole was this: that, whereas in the four years—1842, 1843, 1844, and 1845—there had been reductions in the customs duties to the amount of 4,214,000*l.*, yet the customs revenue amounted in 1845 to 19,800,000*l.*, whilst in 1842 it amounted to only 19,600,000*l.*; that was to say, that whilst there had been a reduction in the customs duties of 4,200,000*l.* in four years, the customs revenue was larger in the last of those four years than in the first by 200,000*l.* No stronger proof could be afforded that the reduction of duties, while it increased the imports and exports of the country, decreased in no material respect the particu-

lar revenue arising from those articles on which revenue was raised. He (the Earl of Dalhousie) did not wish for a moment to lead their Lordships to suppose that he wished to represent that the whole of the increase in the customs revenue was traceable to the reductions which had been made in the customs duties—very far from it: but what he had a right to contend for was, that the anticipations expressed that the reduction of the customs duties would not only be injurious to the community but to the revenue, were completely contradicted by these figures, inasmuch as they showed that the customs revenue had increased by 200,000*l.*; and if that improvement were not to be attributed to the reduction of the customs duties, it must be owing to the improved condition of the people. Thus he had the fact that the reduction of the duties had not diminished the revenue, and had not been attended with those injurious effects on the population which by some had been prognosticated. He was aware that much of this prosperity might be attributed to favourable circumstances in reference to the bountiful harvests with which it had pleased Providence to bless this country. He was ready to admit that; but, nevertheless, their Lordships would recollect other times, when harvests had been equally bountiful, and when the same effects had not been shown on the customs revenue. So, while he admitted that the bounty of Providence in bestowing fruitful and abundant harvests had had some effect, he was not prepared to admit that to that circumstance was to be assigned the entire result. He was entitled likewise to attribute the increase in the customs revenue to the reduction of the duties on raw materials, reducing the price of articles to the consumer, and leading not only to the increased consumption of the particular articles with respect to which the reduction of duty was effected, but also of other articles connected with them. He had now given their Lordships very shortly an outline of the effect of the reduction of duties during the last four years; and it was on a review of these facts—it was from observing that the anticipations entertained with respect to the effect of reductions of the customs duties on the trade and prosperity of the community had been realized, that it was resolved, on the part of the Government, to submit to their Lordships a still further reduction. Accordingly, Her Majesty was advised to

suggest from the Throne whether it would not, looking to the history of the past, be desirable that their Lordships should consider whether a further removal of prohibitory and restrictive duties might not be advisable. The Tariff which he now had the honour of presenting to their Lordships comprehended very many articles, and proceeded in the same direction as the Tariffs of preceding years; it was regulated by the same principle, but in a different degree. By the 4th Clause of the Bill, it was proposed that the duties should be removed entirely from all articles of food of first necessity, whether they consisted of live animals, or of meat fresh or preserved, or meat in any shape that could be called an article of necessity. In conformity with this principle, actuated by the desire to do strict justice, and in consideration of the other measure, to the principle of which their Lordships had given their assent on a previous evening, it was felt by Her Majesty's Government that they could not, upon any principle of justice or good faith, keep up a protecting duty upon any articles of manufactures which came under the same category—on woollens, on linens, and on cottons—with the exception of those articles which were made up for the purposes of luxury less than for those of general use and necessity. The duty was, therefore, proposed to be removed from all articles manufactured from woollens, cottons, and linens, in the mass, except those articles which were manufactured for luxury, such as damask table-cloths and cambrics, and others of a like nature, on which a certain amount of duty was still to be retained. He held in his hand a return of the value of the several articles of cotton, woollen, and linen entered for home consumption in the last year. It appeared that the value of the articles made from cotton was 39,100*l.* while the amount proposed to be repealed upon these articles was 35,000*l.*, leaving only a duty upon 3,600*l.* to be levied. Again, upon woollens the value of the imported articles manufactured abroad was 162,000*l.*, and it was proposed to reduce the duty upon 158,000*l.* of these; consequently the value of the articles on which the duty was to be retained was about 3,000*l.* There was some difficulty in regard to linens, as one portion of the articles made of it were taken by value, and another by measurement; but it appeared that the value was 12,453*l.*, the value of those upon which it was proposed to reduce

the duty was 9,900*l.*, being cambrics, French lawns, embroidered handkerchiefs, damasks, diapers, &c., all purely articles of luxury, and not of necessity to the great body of the people. He was anxious to make this statement, because at the outset the Government had been met with the objection that inasmuch as the measure was a free-trade measure, the principle of exception, as applied to any article, was one of injustice: and that the whole duty should under such circumstances be removed, or otherwise not removed at all. But in point of fact, with respect to those articles of linen on which the duty was retained, they were purely articles of luxury; and with regard to those which were composed of linen and woollen, they were principally made up articles, such as shirts and other matters of that kind, which gave employment to the poor when made in this country; and in justice to them the duty on these articles should be retained. The next article on which the duty was to be removed was silk; but as his noble Friend near him had given notice of a Motion on that subject on going into Committee, he (the Earl of Dalhousie) should not detain their Lordships by dwelling on it then. He should merely state the single fact that, whereas the duty upon that article now professed to be 30 per cent. upon the value, in consequence of the alterations in value which had taken place since 1826—the period of the last regulation of the Tariff as respected it—the duty had practically increased, so as to be now in effect 100, 150, and even 200 per cent. In the Tariff now proposed, the whole was calculated at a uniform duty of 15 per cent. upon the article. In like manner, in respect to articles manufactured of metal, brass, iron, steel, lead, tin, &c., the principle of the duty in 1842 was 20 per cent. upon them; but it was now proposed to reduce it to 10 per cent. The ruling figure of the Tariff now proposed was 10 per cent. upon manufactured articles, whereas that of 1842 was 20 per cent. There were two other articles of consumption upon which the duty was now proposed to be altered, namely, butter and cheese. In 1842 these articles had not been touched purely upon consideration of revenue, because both produced large sums to the public. But when it was proposed to reduce the duty generally upon food and clothing of all kinds, it would be at once inconsistent and unjust to omit them for that reason from the reduction. When their Lordships came to the

Committee he would be prepared to state the case at large; but he believed that the quantity of these articles introduced into this country from abroad, as compared with the produce of England and Ireland, would be found to be very insignificant, and that the price of the articles depended not upon the amount of the duty, but upon the particular demand for them in certain places. The other articles which it was proposed to deal with were brandies and generally foreign spirits. The duty upon them at present was 22s. 6d. the gallon. It was well known to their Lordships that in spite of all the exertions of the Custom-house, the quantity of these articles brought into the country surreptitiously was extremely large. The Government were of opinion that the duty of 22s. 6d. was a far higher duty than the article would bear without fostering smuggling. The Government did not anticipate, by the reduction they proposed, any very general increase of consumption. But their object was to defeat the operations of the smuggler, and only to impose such a duty as would not make it worth his while to carry on the illicit trade; so that the article, when imported, would be sent through the Custom-house, and a demoralizing and irregular trade extinguished. The last article to which he should refer was one the reduction of which was only prospective—namely, timber. In 1842 a reduction had been made in the duty upon colonial timber to 1s.—a nominal amount; while upon foreign timber it had been reduced, in 1843, from 55s. to 25s. The return which he had already alluded to showed the effect of the reduction upon the imports of articles in the periods that had intervened. Between 1840 and 1842 the customs duties on timber were computed on a different principle to what they were subsequently. In 1842, under the new system, they were taken by measurement. These were the returns as regarded

FOREIGN DEALS AND BATTENS.

						Lords.
1843	...	...	...	...	...	220,000
1844	...	...	...	...	...	321,000
1845	...	...	...	...	...	342,000

NEW FOREIGN TIMBER.

						Lords.
1843	...	...	...	...	...	121,000
1844	...	...	...	...	...	202,000
1845	...	...	...	...	...	282,000

Simultaneously, too, with the increase in the consumption of foreign timber there had been a large increase in the consumption of colonial timber.

COLONIAL TIMBER, DEALS, BATTENS, &c.

						Lords.
1843	...	...	...	...	...	347,000
1844	...	...	...	...	...	398,000
1845	...	...	...	...	...	408,000

DITTO MEASUREMENT.

						Lords.
1843	...	...	...	...	...	605,000
1844	...	...	...	...	...	601,000
1845	...	...	...	...	...	796,000

The statement of prices made up to the end of last year showed that the consumer had got the full benefit of the reduction which had taken place in the duties upon both descriptions of timber. The prices were—

YELLOW CANADIAN.

1842	...	from	£3	5	0	to	£3	15	0
1843	...	"	2	15	0	"	3	5	0
1844	...	"	2	15	0	"	3	5	0
1845	...	"	2	15	0	"	3	5	0

BALTIC.

1842	...	"	5	5	0	"	5	5	0
1843	...	"	5	0	0	"	5	5	0
1844	...	"	4	0	0	"	4	5	0
1845	...	"	3	15	0	"	4	5	0

It ranged on Jan. 6, 1846, from 4l. 7s. 6d. to 4l. 12s. 6d. The Paper from which he quoted was, "Return of the House of Commons," No. 175, for this year; and it completely bore him out in the statement which he had made, that the benefit of the reduction was felt by the consumer during the greater part of that period. Since last year, however, that benefit was not so apparent, because the enormous demand for timber, colonial and foreign, for railways and public edifices, prevented the decline in prices. On these grounds it was that Her Majesty's Ministers proposed further to reduce the duty on foreign timber by a gradual process—namely, on the 5th of April, 1847, from its present figure, 25s., to 20s.; and on the 5th of April, 1848, from 20s. to 15s.; leaving colonial timber as it stood, at a nominal duty of 1s. These were the principal articles to which he felt bound to direct their Lordships' attention as regarded the details of the measure proposed for their consideration; but he wished also to direct it for a moment to the principles involved in the Bill. It had been stated by a noble Lord on the first reading of the Bill that it left many things undone; and that it was, as a measure of free trade, therefore inconsistent. Now, he (the Earl of Dalhousie) altogether and totally denied and disclaimed the character thus attempted to be given to the measure. Its principle was not free trade, but the reduction of protecting duties and the removal of those which were prohibitory. He

did not attempt to deny that there were many anomalous parts in the Bill; but he submitted it solely as a measure for the reduction of protection and the removal of prohibition, not as a free-trade measure. The Government, of course, reserved to themselves the right of carrying on still further the reduction which they proposed in protective duties; but, at the same time, he was bound to add, it would be done cautiously, tenderly, and not without reference to the interests which had grown up under protection in particular cases, and, above all, not without reference to considerations of the revenue of the country. He, therefore, commended the measure to their Lordships, not under the nickname which had been bestowed upon it—namely, a free-trade measure, but as what it really and truly was, a measure for the removal of prohibitory and the reduction of protective duties; and he saw no reason whatever why, in that character, it should not receive their Lordships' sanction and support.

The DUKE OF RICHMOND moved, as an Amendment, that the Bill be read a second time that day six months, upon the very ground upon which it had been recommended to their Lordships' notice—namely, the removal of protective duties. In the first place, however, he should complain of the course taken by his noble Friend in proposing it to their Lordships. His noble Friend stated that the measure he proposed came before them recommended by the Crown. He denied that, and said it was unconstitutional, and contrary to their Lordships' privileges, that Her Majesty's name should be used as in favour of or against any measure before their Lordships. The Queen's Speech recommended this measure, but that was the Speech of the Ministers.

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE said, he did not make use of the words "recommended by the Crown," in his address to their Lordships; and he begged of the noble Duke not to misapprehend his statements. What he did say was, that, acting on their experience of the past, the responsible advisers of the Crown had recommended Her Majesty to suggest the measure in the Speech from the Throne. He had never said anything which could be construed into a statement that such was the opinion of the Crown; only that it had been recommended by Her Majesty's Ministers.

The DUKE OF RICHMOND was glad to hear his noble Friend's explanation, and to

find that he agreed with him that no measure ought to be urged on the adoption of Parliament, simply on the ground that it had been recommended by the Crown. But he wished also to observe that his noble Friend, in laying before them the returns of exports and imports, had omitted to tell them, as he did in 1842, the value of the articles at the present moment on which he proposed to reduce the duty. He saw that by this Bill they were going to reduce the duty on butter and cheese. He had always thought it was a principle with Chancellors of the Exchequer not to reduce duties which were increasing duties. Now he believed it would be found that both these duties were increasing; and it appeared to him, therefore, there could be no reason whatever for reducing them except hostility to the agricultural interests. His noble Friend told them that he retained the duty on manufactured cotton goods. Now, he must say, that this was treating the cotton manufacturers extremely ill. Their Lordships would remember that within the last fortnight his noble Friend had told them that the manufacturers required no protection at all—that they could make up any disadvantage by their industry, skill, and Heaven knew what besides; and that they were anxious to be rid of all protection. He (the Duke of Richmond) could not see why cotton dresses should not be imported free into this country as well as corn, and why the farmer's and labourer's wife should not have a cheap dress as well as the manufacturer and the operative cheap corn. But his objection to taking off protective duties was, that they would thereby substitute foreign labour for their own. Would his noble Friend tell them what the effect of this measure had already been on the wages of the paper-stainers? Their Lordships were aware that foreign paper could now come in in anticipation of the passing of this measure. He understood that before this measure was proposed the paper-stainers were earning about 2*l.* 10*s.* per week, which was not too high, considering the rent they had to pay, and the price they had to give for water and other necessities which they required quite as much as cheap bread; for while there was much talk about "cheap bread," the labourers and workmen in our large towns were greatly in want of cheap water; and monstrous good care was taken by levying an excise duty upon malt, that they did not get anything better. The

paper-stainers, while receiving the wages he had mentioned, worked only four days in the week; but since the proposition to reduce the duty on foreign paper, they had been compelled to work six days a week, while their wages had been reduced to 30s. a week. His real objection to all these free-trade measures was, that they must have this effect—to reduce the wages of our own artisans and labourers. His noble Friend (the Earl of Dalhousie) had characterized damask and some other articles as luxuries, and had said that on that account it was not deemed advisable to reduce the duties upon them. He (the Duke of Richmond) had not the least wish to lower these protective duties; he was for keeping up every one of them. He wished the cotton manufacturing labourers to be protected as well as the farmers. But, as his noble Friend had characterized the articles to which he referred as luxuries, he (the Duke of Richmond) must beg to ask why the duty upon carriages had been reduced? Was not a carriage a luxury? Was not silk a luxury? He complained that the proposers of these free-trade measures did not carry out their principles. They reduced the duty on some luxuries, that the Minister's wife might go to Court in a very fine gown and in an elegant earring; while they retained the duty on other luxuries. He believed that the persons employed by the coach-manufacturers of this country would suffer very materially from the reduction of duty on foreign carriages. Again, his noble Friend was going to reduce the duties on spirits. Now his noble Friend had attempted to show, with respect to all other articles, that a reduction of duties had been compensated for by increased consumption; but when he came to spirits he stood steady, and said the reduction of duty on spirits would not increase the consumption. He was sorry the right rev. prelate (the Bishop of Norwich), who had presented so many petitions against the consumption of spirits on the Sabbath, was not then present, that he might protest against the increased facilities which this Bill would give to spirit-drinking. As to the plea of preventing smuggling, he was convinced that if the Custom-house officers did their duty, they were well able to prevent smuggling; and it would be readily admitted that there was much less smuggling in this country now than formerly. He would not say whether a great quantity of silks might not have been smuggled by some large houses in

the metropolis; but, as a resident in a maritime county, he would venture to say that smuggling was not now carried on to one quarter the extent it was thirty years ago. After the decision their Lordships had come to the other evening, he (the Duke of Richmond) felt it was of very little use to trouble them at any length upon this question, for he well knew what their decision would be. He would, however, move, that this Bill be read a second time that day six months; and he protested against it, as having a tendency to decrease the wages of employment of the working classes of this country.

The EARL OF WICKLOW said, he thought there was great injustice in the anomalous and inconsistent manner in which the Government were attempting to carry out their principles in this measure. If the Government had proposed a measure of this kind which put all classes on an equality, he would have been one of the first to support it; but he thought in the whole course of their proceedings in this as well as in the great measure they discussed the other night, they had acted on a system of injustice which ought not to be allowed in this country. His noble Friend (the Earl of Dalhousie) said, that he expected a great increase of revenue from the reduction of duties, and this might be a very good reason for reducing duties; but his noble Friend was going by his Bill to abolish several duties, by which means he must abolish the revenue derived from them altogether. In glancing over the Tariff he found there were forty-eight articles on which the duties were abolished altogether, and he found that twenty-two of these were duties in favour of agriculture. His noble Friend had alluded to the reduction of duty on linen, as affording some compensation; but his noble Friend must have forgotten that if this would not prejudicially affect the English agriculturist, it would very seriously affect the agricultural population in the most prosperous and peaceable part of Ireland. Believing, therefore, that the application of the principles of the Government in this measure was unequal and unjust, he felt it his duty to protest against it.

EARL GREY said, that to a considerable extent he concurred in the opinions just expressed by his noble Friend (Earl of Wicklow). He was bound to say that, looking at the Bill, he could not see any distinct principle fairly and fully carried out. His noble Friend (the Earl of Dalhousie) told them that the principle on

which the Government proceeded had been to get rid of prohibitory duties, and to reduce protective duties, and at the same time he told them they considered protective duties to be unsound in principle. Now if this were so, it seemed to him that the proper course for the Government to adopt would be to get rid of them altogether. At least, they should act on one plan or the other. He could understand his noble Friend on the cross benches, who thought everything should be protected, although he (Earl Grey) believed this would soon deprive them of all trade; and, on the other hand, he could understand and agree with those who thought protective duties were altogether wrong; and in that opinion he entirely concurred, for he believed that the utmost possible freedom of exchange among nations added to their mutual wealth and to the comfort and enjoyment of their people; but he could not understand this half measure of the Government, which was partly in favour of protection and partly against it. The noble Lord had said, however, that the Government reserved to themselves the right of applying this principle gradually, and with due regard to the welfare of existing interests, which had sprung up under the protective system. He (Earl Grey) considered that nothing could be more mischievous and injurious to those interests than the laying down a principle which would ultimately lead to the entire abolition of all protective duties, and yet partially retaining them. Such a system would occasion constant uncertainty and changes. What had been its effect already? They commenced the reduction of duties in 1842, when the Government declared that 20 per cent. should be the maximum amount of our protective duties. In three years afterwards they found this would not do, and they came down to 15 and 10 per cent.; and if the Government continued in office a few years longer they would say 10 per cent. was too much. These constant alterations were most pernicious to commerce and trade. He looked on this Bill, however, as a most important step in the right direction. He accepted it—not as carrying into effect, as they ought to be carried out, the principles for which he contended, but as a valuable instalment of what those who concurred with him in opinion might expect to gain; and with this view he would give the measure his hearty support.

LORD ASHBURTON was understood to say that he objected to this Bill as an un-

necessary sacrifice of the revenue and industry of this country. He believed its effect would be to lower wages and to reduce the labourer to a lower scale of life, and that it was a measure founded altogether on mistake and delusion. He agreed with his noble Friend opposite (Earl Grey), that these perpetual changes were pernicious, and all that surprised him was that the energies of this country could survive being thus perpetually tampered with. The cry was one day "protection," and another "free trade;" and no one knew what was next to happen, or what crotchet would next enter the minds of persons at the head of the Government. He totally dissented from the opinion which seemed to be taken up by the Government, that the present prosperous condition of the country was the result of their commercial policy. It was true there was great prosperity at present, and that it had lasted some time; but he defied any man by any process of reasoning to make out that it was at all connected with the alterations we had made in our Tariff, or with the reduction of our duties. Any person acquainted with the course of things in this country for as many years as he had been, must know that the succession of favourable and unfavourable periods had been constant at distinct periods, and he considered that those variations were clearly and distinctly traceable to obvious causes. He would just mention some of them by way of example. The first great distress which he remembered as coming upon the country, was produced by the sudden return to cash payments, which, as they all knew, had been attended with great injustice and suffering. Several years of severe distress followed this rash measure, but at length the elasticity of the commerce and industry of this country overcame it. Hardly, however, had we done so, before we were again plunged into the severest distress by the proceedings of the year 1825, known as the bubble year. At length the country recovered from this also; but in 1837 it was thrown back into the same condition by the state of our commercial relations with America. The same result followed, and the greatest possible distress continued to prevail till 1841, when the change of Administration took place. The years 1841 and 1842 were also periods of distress; but this country, like all others possessing its vigour, skill, and industry, then began to recover, and in 1843 those great improvements took place which had continued down to

the present time. If their Lordships looked at the evidence before the Committee which sat to inquire into the burdens on agriculture, they would see this course of events distinctly explained. The Government, however, asserted that the singular prosperity of the country had been occasioned by the alterations and reductions they had made in the Tariff; and they said that this result encouraged them to go still further in the same direction. He (Lord Ashburton) would venture to say that no one, substantially acquainted with the great industrial interests of the country, would support that view. This country had attained to an extraordinary degree of prosperity under a system of protection, and that man must be rash indeed who would make that prosperity an excuse for the present measure. He thought the financial bearing of this measure an important consideration. At present there was no surplus in the Exchequer worth speaking of; and if a reaction came, as in the course of events must naturally happen, having exhausted our fiscal resources, he did not know how we should meet the deficit, after the reductions proposed to be made by the measure before the House. At the present moment, when we were sending out our squadrons, our financial condition was well deserving of attention. He believed that the measures of the Government would be followed by a deterioration in the condition of the labourer, and he therefore disapproved of the present Bill.

LORD MONTEAGLE said, the noble Lord who had just sat down had blamed the adoption of free-trade measures by the Government; but he (Lord Monteaale) remembered when the noble Lord in the other House had shown himself a strenuous supporter of many of the measures of Mr. Huskisson. He had heard with regret and surprise the opinions expressed by the noble Lord on the currency measure of 1819. Upon that subject the noble Lord had given the weight of his authority to one of the wickedest delusions that had ever been circulated; for it was by the suspension and not by the resumption of cash payments that all the injustice and inconvenience that had taken place had been originated. People who had borrowed money did so on the condition, that after the restoration of the peace their debts would have to be paid in the sterling money of the realm. No injustice to any one was therefore committed, except, perhaps, by

postponing to 1819 what ought to have been done at an earlier period. With respect to the periods of distress which had been alluded to, they had been always connected with deficient harvests. As to the present measure, he looked upon it as a very considerable step in the right direction, and he considered the measures of commercial reform which had taken place as an element in our commercial prosperity. He could not, however, approve indiscriminately of all the changes which had been effected by the present Government. The colonial timber duties had been needlessly sacrificed without effecting any increase in the revenue; and with regard to the sugar duties, the changes effected in them had injured both trade and revenue, and he held it impossible for the Government to persevere in the principles upon which those changes were founded. An importation of 70,000 tons of high-priced sugar had been calculated upon, which would have yielded a revenue of about 1,400,000*l.* But these figures had been so far from being realized, that only 1,500 tons had really been imported; and in place of a revenue of 1,500,000*l.* only 24,000*l.* had been received. Then a reduction of 1*l.* 2*d.* per cwt. had taken place in the duty upon West India sugar, which had entailed upon the country an enormous sacrifice of revenue, without a corresponding benefit to the consumer. The revenue lost about 1,500,000*l.*, being 1*l.* 2*d.* per cwt., and the consumer had only gained 9*d.* per cwt. in the price. Who, then, had benefited by the reduction? He mentioned those things, that they might not be further involved in reductions which injured the revenue while they did not benefit the consumers. One word in defence of the principles of freedom of commerce. When Her Majesty's Government stated on a former occasion that the principles of free trade were the principles of common sense, and that "to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market" was the rule which ought to be pursued by nations as well as by individuals, he hailed the declaration with considerable satisfaction; for he felt it to be impossible that such a declaration could be made without being followed by great and useful results. The measures which the Government had introduced were founded upon these principles, which were those which had been advocated by some of the best and wisest of statesmen in former times—men who

were venerated by their Lordships and the whole civilized world. Mr. Pitt had declared that they were the most applicable to countries which, like ours, exchanged their manufactured produce for the raw materials of others. In 1820 the famous London petition in favour of free trade was presented by the noble Lord opposite (Lord Ashburton), and that petition laid down the doctrines of freedom of trade much more absolutely than they were laid down in the Bill before their Lordships' House—nay, as absolutely and boldly as the gentlemen who were considered philosophical writers, and whom noble Lords opposite designated "rash theorists," had laid them down; and his noble Friend, when he presented that petition, supported the doctrines and principles laid down in it. He (Lord Montagu) did not think that, if this Bill passed, there would be any surplus revenue: exclude the Sycee silver received for the ransom of Canton, and the most they could expect was that the revenue and expenditure should meet. He admitted that the finances of the country were at the present moment on a good footing; but there was no great mystery about that, if they took an income tax of five millions a year, and added it to the ordinary revenue. The change that had taken place was solely attributable to that. In his opinion, it would have been a much wiser measure on the part of the Government if they had made their property tax a perpetual tax, intending to repeal it as soon as the circumstances of the country would enable them to do so, than to have made it only a temporary law, renewing it from time to time; because every time that they called on Parliament to renew the income tax, they were expected to give up some indirect tax which was unpopular or inconvenient. The tendency of this system of continuing the income tax for two or three years only, was to go from indirect to direct taxation; and he said most earnestly, that a more dangerous career could not under any circumstances be entered upon. It went upon a false principle, and held out to the mass of the people that the rich and those who were the holders of property had the capacity of paying all the expenses of the State. Now, that was not only dangerous, but entirely false. But, as a further consequence, it led to this fallacy—that the taxation on the rich man and the capitalist could be augmented without indirectly affecting the interest of the

poor man also; than which nothing could be more erroneous. In conclusion, the noble Lord expressed his warm concurrence in the Bill.

Bill read a second time.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Thursday, June 11, 1846.

CHESHIRE AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY.

VISCOUNT COMBERMERE presented a petition against the repeal of the Corn Laws; and among others one from the tenant-farmers and other members of the Cheshire Agricultural Protection Society, praying the House to reject the Corn Bill, and the other free-trade measures of Her Majesty's Ministers. The noble and gallant Viscount said he cordially supported the prayer of this petition.

LORD DELAMERE, in reference to this petition, denied that it expressed the opinions of the tenant-farmers of Cheshire. It emanated from a meeting which was held at Crewe, the chairman of which was his respected friend Sir Richard Brook; but there were only two or three tenant-farmers present, and, as far as they were concerned, the meeting was a total failure. He assured their Lordships that the majority of the tenant-farmers of the county palatine of Chester were in favour of the Bill now before the House. This opinion was confirmed by the evidence of circumstances which were notorious to the public. There had been no alteration whatever in the price of land in the county; and in the value of every species of farming stock, corn as well as cattle, there had been none but the usual fluctuations. If there had been any farms to let, the applications for them continued to be as numerous as before, and at no diminution of rent. He mentioned these facts from his general knowledge of the county, not of his own estate only. He had supported the Bill before the House from its first introduction, and he should continue to support it, because he was convinced that, if carried, it would be of very considerable benefit to the public in general, and be attended with no injurious consequences whatever to the agricultural interest. He was told it was but the commencement of other measures, which were intended to interfere with the constitutional privileges of their Lordships,

and to overthrow the ancient institutions of the country. But he did not in the least credit such representations; if he did, he would be the last man in that House to support the Bill, and least of all such measures as the Anti-Corn-Law League would prefer, for he liked them not; but he conscientiously believed the present Bill would be of great advantage to the country generally, without any diminution of advantage to the agriculturist.

VISCOUNT COMBERMERE was obliged to his noble Friend for his tacit admission that this was a farmer's and not a landlord's question. He (Viscount Combermere) had nothing to do with the society or the meeting from which the petition emanated; but he would inform the House that a great number of his noble Friend's own tenants were members of the Association. As to the Corn Bill being supported by the people of Cheshire, the assertion was founded upon a misconception of the state of feeling. His noble Friend must have been in such places as Macclesfield, Stockport, and Congleton. He (Viscount Combermere) had been all over the county, and, except in that corner of it which was near the head-quarters of the Anti-Corn-Law League, he found the people were very much averse to the Bill.

LORD DELAMERE asked the noble Viscount whether he was able to state that a large number of tenant-farmers attended the meeting in question?

VISCOUNT COMBERMERE, in reply, said he had a list of the members, tenant-farmers of the society, which he would read to the House, or present to his noble Friend.

LORD DELAMERE, in reference to a statement which was not heard, said he ought to explain, that in Cheshire land was not generally let on lease. There were few instances of land being let on lease in that county.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND said, the noble Lord (Lord Delamere) had just given a pretty strong proof, perhaps unconsciously, of the feelings of the tenant-farmers of Cheshire. Notwithstanding they held by the year, they were found coming forward expressing opinions as to this Bill in opposition to those of their landlords. The tenant-farmers had been ill used throughout all these proceedings. They were continually presenting petitions to that House, stating that they did not like the Bill; but whenever one was presented from them, up jumped some noble

Lord, as the noble Lord had just done, and said he knew that, contrary to what they stated in the petition, the tenant-farmers were not against the Bill. Why had not, he would ask, the noble Lord (Lord Delamere), with all his influence, induced the tenant-farmers to present a petition in favour of the Bill? That he had great influence with them was evident, for he found the noble Lord's name among the subscribers to the "Cheshire Agricultural Protection Society." The president, too, was Lord de Tabley, who had given a proxy in favour of the second reading of the Bill. The two noble Lords, he found, not only joined the society, but they supported it by their influence, and contributed to its funds. The farmers of Cheshire were no doubt grateful to them for these attentions; but their gratitude would not, he thought, last very long, when they came to know that they had voted, both of them, for a measure so detrimental to their interests. The question would not be long before it was put at rest; and he (the Duke of Richmond) hoped the Cheshire farmers would follow the example of those of Nottinghamshire and Gloucestershire, and not return any man to Parliament who had abandoned his principles. He would tell the farmers of England, that whatever might be the present fate of the Bill, they had the game in their own hands. They were a large, powerful, and influential body of the people; and the opportunity was not far distant for them to speak their sentiments, if they only chose to exert themselves. His noble and gallant Friend had recommended their Lordships to pass the Bill because there must soon be a new Parliament; and if it were for protection the Bill might be got rid of, and protection be resumed. In connexion with this opinion, he (the Duke of Richmond) sincerely believed that many of the greatest agitators for the repeal of the Corn Laws were now alarmed at their own work. They had no idea that free-trade principles were to be applied to every article in which they themselves dealt. When they asked for the entire repeal of the Corn Laws, they asked for more than they expected to obtain, in order that they might make better terms for themselves. The Bill, however, had not yet passed; and he hoped it never would pass as it now stood.

LORD DELAMERE begged to explain. He had never belonged to an agricultural protection society in his life. It was not in his recollection that he had ever sub-

scribed to one. This was certainly the first time he had heard of such a fact. At all events, he never had, and never would belong to such an association.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL—COMMITTEE.

The EARL of RIPON moved, that the House do now resolve itself into Committee.

EARL STANHOPE said, he rose for the purpose of opposing the Motion, and of moving as an Amendment, that their Lordships go into Committee on the Bill that day six months. He had not the vanity to hope that any observations he could offer would materially affect their Lordships' judgment, particularly after the able and eloquent speeches which had been recently delivered upon this subject, and more especially after the admirable and unanswerable speech of his noble Friend (Lord Stanley)—a speech which, whether he looked at the eloquence that adorned it, or the valuable information it contained, appeared to him to be far superior to any speech he had ever heard delivered in that House. He was, however, unwilling to give a silent vote on this occasion; and he considered that it would be, in some degree, a dereliction of the duty which he owed to his country, if he were silent. They had now arrived at a crisis which was far more important than that of the Reform Bill, and which must prove of the highest consequence, whether they considered the magnitude of the interests that were involved in the measure, or the social as well as the political consequences that would flow from it—a measure of such a character as had never before been recommended by any Government; and he was bound to add, that no proposition, from whatever quarter it might originate, had ever before been so feebly and miserably defended by its promoters. It was in the first place assumed that there was imminent danger of a famine in Ireland, because in some districts—not in all—there was a deficiency—not a failure—in the crop of potatoes. But it was at the time satisfactorily proved, beyond the possibility of doubt, that there was then an abundance of food in the country at large, and more especially of that sort of food which formed the principal article of sustenance to the poor—that the crop of potatoes had been more than usually abundant. He did not deny—on the contrary he deeply regretted—the distress which existed in Ireland; but this arose not from a scarcity

of food, but because the lower classes were plunged in a state of destitution from the want of permanent employment. They were totally destitute of employment; and undoubtedly it was the duty of the Government to take effectual measures to remedy this evil, which, so long as it was allowed to continue, there could be no hope whatever of tranquillity or prosperity in that unhappy country. It was very possible that the Government might have been deluded in the first instance by exaggerated reports on this subject, and he was willing to make every allowance for that; but admitting, for the sake of argument, that scarcity of food was to be apprehended in Ireland, was it not to be expected that the deficiency of produce would be indicated by the increase of price of provisions? and then, by the operation of the sliding scale, corn of all descriptions would have been admitted without the necessity of interference either by the Government or the Legislature—without creating needless alarm, which was always injurious—without raising in foreign markets the price of the very article which we were desirous to purchase—without inducing those who had stores of potatoes to hoard them instead of bringing them to market for sale—without, in short, any of those mischiefs which had arisen from the late groundless panic which the Prime Minister, for reasons best known to himself, had thought proper to raise. On this false assumption of a scarcity of provisions were founded all the subsequent measures. At first it was proposed to issue an Order in Council for the free importation of foreign grain; and the great autocrat of the Cabinet proposed this measure to his Colleagues in November last as being then of urgent necessity, though the country was now in the middle of June without feeling any inconvenience from the rejection of the measure. The Prime Minister had never condescended to notice the observations which had been made by a noble Duke, that a free importation of foreign corn would be of no advantage whatever to people who had not the means of purchasing it, and that the true remedy was to be found in providing them with employment, and giving gratuitous relief to those who were incapable of labour. But supposing that the Order in Council had been issued, it was clear that it ought to have been considered only as a temporary expedient to meet a temporary emergency, and that the Corn Laws should have been

suspended only for a short period, and then allowed to come into operation again as before. The Prime Minister, however, declared, with the strangest *non sequitur* which he had ever heard, that he would not consent to issue such an Order in Council, unless he was allowed, when Parliament met, to bring under their consideration, what he was pleased to term, an adjustment of the Corn Laws; and by that appropriate designation it appeared he intended to indicate a measure for their entire and final surrender—a complete concession of everything which had been so long clamorously and menacingly demanded. This, then, was the ostensible origin of the measure; and in this case the old fable was reversed, for it was the mouse which was pregnant, and which had been delivered of a mountain. But what were they to say of the conduct of the Minister who had been raised to his present eminence by the confidence which the friends of protection had reposed in him; by the hope and the expectation they entertained that he would be true to his trust, and not desert the principles which he had uniformly professed? On this, as on other occasions, he should be unwilling to introduce mere personal attack; but he would quote to the House an observation of a noble Lord which was not unimportant, because they all knew how much the conduct of Members of both Houses of Parliament on both sides was influenced by the confidence that was reposed in their political leaders, and therefore he would refer to the observation of the noble Earl (Ripon). In the Amendment to the Address which was moved by the noble Earl in August, 1841, and adopted by a great majority of that House, it was stated in reference to the same subject which they were now considering, "it is essential to the satisfactory issue of our deliberations on these and other measures of public concern, that your Majesty's Government should possess the confidence of this House and of the country." Now, he would ask what man was there who any longer entertained confidence in Sir Robert Peel? They had heard from a noble and learned Lord opposite (Lord Brougham) an eloquent panegyric on the present Prime Minister, representing his conduct not only as meritorious but as magnanimous; not only as not inconsistent, but as amply justified by the circumstances in which he was placed; and that his sincerity was shown by the consideration that he had sacrificed private friendship, public

confidence, party interests, nay, even personal reputation, from the deep and conscientious conviction he entertained that these measures were essential for the welfare of the country. Now admitting, for the sake of argument, the hypothesis of his noble and learned Friend, who, like a skilful advocate, had assumed the very circumstances in debate, what did it amount to? Why, to this—that the Prime Minister, by his own confession, during the long course of his political career till a very few months ago, had been proceeding upon a wrong course, and had all his lifetime continued to defend principles and measures which he now condemned as impolitic and unjust. If such was the case, what confidence could henceforward be reposed in the judgment of Sir Robert Peel? Assuming that he had made this great, and to him most surprising discovery, that protection was indefensible in principle, and injurious in operation, he ought—if he had possessed only a small and slender portion of that self-knowledge which was represented by the philosophers of antiquity as the summit of human wisdom—he ought to have resigned a post for which, by his own confession, he was entirely incompetent; he ought to have retired, feeling pain and sorrow for the part he had so long acted, and deep concern for the mischief of which he had been the innocent because the ignorant cause; and feeling that he could no longer rely upon his own judgment, he ought no longer to have attempted to influence the opinions and convictions of others. But while on one side an attempt was made to justify the inconsistency of Sir Robert Peel, he had heard from another quarter that that right hon. Baronet was guilty of no inconsistency at all—that he had always been more or less in his own mind a free trader; that his language had been intelligible to every one on this subject ever since 1842; and an appeal had been made personally to himself (Earl Stanhope) whether such was not the case. Now, undoubtedly in that, and in the following year, he (Earl Stanhope) did express with that frankness which was inseparable from his character, the suspicions he entertained with regard to those previous measures which had been thoughtlessly and foolishly defended by some, on the ground that they would give greater security to that amount of protection that yet remained; whereas, he thought they were only intended as preparatory steps to the removal of protection altogether, and

intended to facilitate the execution of that event. But, at that time, when he stated his suspicions, he was rebuked by the noble Lord the President of the Council; he was assured at the time that they were unfounded; that they were equally unjust and injurious: but he must say, that they were all confirmed now. If they were to adopt, then, this other hypothesis, and to hold that there was no change of opinion in Sir Robert Peel, though there had been the greatest inconsistency in his conduct, he would then ask, what confidence would they place in his political integrity? He would not, on this occasion, quote a line from *Hansard*. Noble Lords near him might be perfectly secure from having their speeches reviled on this occasion; indeed, it would be quite useless for him to do so; because, in all likelihood, he would receive the same answer which had already been given in another place: "I have changed my opinion—with this I dispose of all my former speeches and declarations"—as if the force and urgency of an argument were to be invalidated by a change in the opinion of the man who had once used it, and as if the same person, whether he blew hot on a question, or whether he blew cold, was always to be considered infallible. They had been told that this marvellous—he had almost called it this miraculous—conversion of Sir Robert Peel, was the result wholly of his experience of the last three years. He could not deny but his conduct might be very much influenced by what he had observed during the last three years of the exertions of the Anti-Corn-Law League, and by contrasting that with the inertness which, during a considerable portion of that period, was shown by their opponents; and by supposing, though most erroneously, that those who were the most noisy were also the most numerous and powerful body in the community. It had been said, that during the last three years the country had enjoyed great prosperity. He would not now inquire whether that prosperity was founded upon a solid and secure foundation, or whether it was likely to be permanent; or whether, on the other hand, it did not arise principally, if not altogether, from temporary causes, and which might be transitory in their duration. But, admitting that to be so, he would ask, what better reason could they have for not rashly changing a system which had yielded such results? The potato famine and the alarm which had been

so studiously excited upon this subject, had now faded "like the baseless fabric of a vision." They were now in the same position that they were in before the question was discussed at all; and they were now called upon, on the mere *ipse dixit* of the most rash and presumptuous Minister that had ever yet governed this country, to renounce all the opinions which they had deliberately formed and frequently expressed in that House—to reverse the whole system on which this country had acted for centuries, and under which it had acquired its unparalleled prosperity. They were told, indeed, by him who was once considered a great authority, but who would now be considered as a great authority no longer—he meant, of course, the Prime Minister—that protective duties were, considered in themselves, liable to objection in principle, and that they were injurious in their operation. But if they were for a moment to admit this doctrine, he wanted to know why it was to be applied to corn alone, and not generally to all kinds of manufactures? If the principles of free trade were, as they were represented to be, the principles of common sense—if protection was, as they had been told, the bane both of agriculture and manufactures, then they had a right to be allowed to enjoy all the advantages of free trade without restriction and without delay; they had a right to demand an immediate and entire adoption, to the fullest extent, of the principles of free trade. Such, he believed, would have been the conduct and such the measures of the noble Lord in the other House of Parliament, and of a noble Earl (Earl Grey), the son of a former Prime Minister, had they been called upon to bring forward any provisions on this subject; and he would say that measures of that sort would have been far less objectionable than that which was now proposed. He would say, let us either give full and effective protection to British industry in all its various branches, or let us have no protection at all. Let those who had the hardihood to make that experiment, attempt it if they dared. He knew what the result would be. He knew that the effect would be, an immediate and sudden reaction, which would drive like chaff before the wind the advocates of free trade—which would render the very name odious to all classes in the country—and which would restore in all their force the prohibitory and protective system of their ancestors. If he had no other object than

success, and were merely indifferent to the means by which it was to be attained—if he could bring himself to disregard the sacred dictates of conscience—and Heaven forbid that such should ever be the case!—if he could become insensible to the moral and religious obligation not to do evil that good might come—then he would earnestly entreat their Lordships to pass this measure without any discussion whatever; for he knew that, whatever consequences in other respects might arise from it, the cause of protection to native industry would be triumphantly and permanently secured. On this occasion, however, he would confine himself to that subject only which was before the House—the question of a free importation of corn—without entering into the more extended question of free trade, with regard to which there would be many other opportunities of discussion, and on which, with permission of the House, he might afterwards be disposed to state his opinions. And here, without entering into the argument at all, it might be sufficient for him to ask their Lordships whether it was compatible with their public duties, that they should, without examining into the possible or probable consequences of the measure that was now before them, proceed to pass a Bill which would bring ruin and desolation upon millions of their fellow countrymen, and more especially upon those whose hard lot it was to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, and who had no other resource than their own industry and skill. He would go farther, and ask whether their Lordships could suppose that they had any right to pass this measure when the most numerous, the most meritorious, the most valuable classes in the community, who would be principally and permanently affected by this measure, were not, as they ought to be, represented in the House of Commons? It was said, when the measure of 1842 was introduced, that prices would range from 54s. to 58s. per quarter—that the average, therefore, would be 56s., which was represented as a remunerating price. But it was stated in 1828, by a much greater authority than Sir Robert Peel could ever claim to be—by the late Mr. Canning—who was not considered in his time to be a very warm or zealous friend to agriculture, or an admirer of the aristocratic branch of the Constitution—it was represented by him as being admitted on all hands, without doubt or exception, that a remunerating price could not be ac-

cured at less than 60s. of the old Winchester measure, which was equivalent to 62s. of the present imperial measure. He would not stop to inquire which was the more correct opinion; but this he would say, that they had a right to expect full information, which was essential to the proper consideration of this measure—information upon the point, not what would be the fixed price, for this measure might effect fluctuation even under a system of free trade—but what would be the range of prices under the operation of this Bill. The Prime Minister had informed the Members of the other House of Parliament that he had formed no estimate of its effect. It was said by a noble Lord (Lord Brougham) that it was impossible to answer that question, and therefore unreasonable to ask it. Be it so: he was willing to admit that for the sake of the argument. But he would say in return that it was unreasonable to pass this Bill without such information. Were they not aware that there were two considerations essential to a proper decision of this question: first, the remunerating price of corn; and, next, the price of foreign corn, which was the article to be imported? For if they were not to be informed of the probable range of prices—if they were not to have full, real, satisfactory, and decisive evidence on the point—it would be sufficient for them to refuse to proceed further, because, if they did proceed, they would be legislating in the dark, and might inflict incalculable injury on the most vital interests of the country. But so far were they from knowing what the probable range of prices would be, that the very friends of the measure were not agreed as to the result in general—whether the prices would remain the same as they were at present, or whether they would fall; or even whether they would be raised; for strange, extravagant, and irrational as such a doctrine might appear, it was a fact that a great landed proprietor said, in the course of last winter, that as soon as this measure passed, he must inform his tenants that he would raise their rents ten per cent. If it should have the effect of raising the prices of food, it would have an effect the very reverse of that which its principal and oldest supporters anticipated. Such a result would be by them considered most mischievous; and, in point of fact, if increased price of food would follow the adoption of the Bill, he defied the most ingenious casuist to show its utility. Why, the whole cry of the opponents of the pre-

sent Corn Laws was—cheap bread—a cheap loaf; they promised a large loaf with the repeal—they attracted numbers who did not stop to think, by this cry; but he thought their big loaf would, in the end, be found to resemble much more nearly a penny roll. These people who clamoured so much about cheapness, were ignorant, or what was worse, affected to be ignorant, that cheapness was altogether a relative term, and that, in fact, it was proportional to the means of the consumer. Great apprehension had been expressed by a noble Lord, that the price of corn would not, even with the repeal of the Corn Laws, fall much. That noble Lord was apprehensive the fall would not much exceed 5s. or 6s. a quarter. He seemed to regard a fall of 5s. or 6s. a quarter with great indifference—a mere trifle, in fact: but had that noble Lord ever made a calculation of how much a fall of even 5s. or 6s. a quarter would affect the nation? Did he calculate that there was a home production of 18,000,000 of quarters, and that a loss of 6s. a quarter would amount in the aggregate to 5,400,000*l.*? His noble Friend near him (Lord Stanley) had, confining his calculations to wheat alone, shown a clear loss of 4,000,000*l.* sterling. And who was to gain by this loss? There was not the least intimation from any quarter that the agricultural labourer would be benefited by this plunder of the owners and occupiers of the land. When their Lordships talked about cheapness, let them recollect that the avowed object of those who originated the agitation was to lower wages. [“Hear, hear!”] The noble Lord opposite (the Earl of Radnor) shook his head; but if he were disposed to trouble them with long quotations, he could show from the speeches of several who thought with the noble Lord on this question, as well indeed as from the speeches of the noble Lord himself, that one of the staple arguments in favour of a repeal of the Corn Laws, was, that by cheapening food wages would be lowered, and by lowering wages the manufacturers of this country would be enabled to compete with the manufacturers of the Continent, who, it was said, were able to undersell our manufacturers at present, in consequence of the low wages they paid. But the thing was evident. If, as was said, foreign manufacturers were underselling the English ones in the markets of the world, how could the English manufacturers hope to cope with them except by lowering the wages of labour? Either the wages of the ope-

rative must be lowered as a consequence of this Bill, or the argument so obstinately and so triumphantly put forward must fall to the ground. He thought they had the greatest reason to complain of the manner in which the advocates of this measure both in and out of Parliament dealt with this question. They blew hot and cold upon this question of cheapness. First, they said a repeal of the Corn Laws would produce cheap food; and then when the agriculturists contended that to depreciate the value of their produce very much would be to bring ruin first on them and then on the community at large, these same men turned round and said, “Oh, the measure will not in any material degree lower the price of corn.” In short, they used arguments totally irreconcilable to and inconsistent with each other. He thought no conduct could be more unfair or discreditable than this in any public man; but how much more so in the First Minister of the Crown. The Premier had actually set forth that cheapness was not a necessary result of the measure; and he introduced statements relative to the prices of wheat, to show that the measure might, in fact, tend to elevate the cost of that commodity. The Prime Minister incurred the disgrace not only of adopting the arguments, but of copying the tergiversation of the Anti-Corn-Law League. The League made a great cry about monopoly; and it was the cant word in the mouths of their agents and lecturers in the manufacturing districts: they magnanimously proclaimed that their object was to reduce the price of bread; and they shed their crocodile tears over the “fallen condition” of the agricultural labourer. Such were the claptraps of the League; and these claptraps had found their way even into their Lordships’ House. But when their agents went into the agricultural districts, they represented that the repeal of the Corn Laws would not materially reduce the price of corn; they urged the advantage of a steadiness of price, and they quoted some instances of extreme lowness of price in the home market, the result of harvests of extraordinary abundance, and then they turned to one or two isolated instances where foreign corn had been imported at a greater cost than usual, endeavouring to show, that whilst the repeal would prevent fluctuations, it would not severely act upon the home grower. Arguments based on such imperfect or erroneous data had their due weight in Covent-garden Theatre, be-

cause there was no freedom of discussion allowed, and because if any one ventured to express a different opinion, he would be instantly turned out of the room: but with their Lordships he believed they would have but little weight. It was averaged that each individual in the country consumed a quarter of corn; and it was said, would it not make a great difference to the individual if the price of that quarter was reduced 10 per cent.? Yes, that argument did very well *per se*; but suppose that by throwing land out of cultivation it injured the ability of the consumer to purchase, where was the advantage to him? and that was just the argument for the validity of which he (Earl Stanhope) contended. A noble Lord who was connected with the county of Chester (Viscount Combermere) said, this was a landlord's question. But did not the noble Lord recollect that the great agricultural movement which commenced in 1843 originated with the tenant-farmers? The landlords did not bring them into the field, but they brought in the landlords. He would not attempt to weaken the forcible observation of the noble Duke on the cross benches (the Duke of Richmond) who had well and wisely said, that the tenant had a greater interest in the matter than the landlord—for the landlord's share was but one quarter, whilst the tenant's was three; and again, that if the rent of the landlord was altogether swept away, the quartern loaf would not be diminished in price more than three farthings. These observations were founded upon truth, as any of their Lordships who were acquainted with the subject would at once perceive. Taking the average produce of our arable land at 28s. per acre, and taking the remunerating price to be as Mr. Canning had stated it, 62s. per quarter—a permanent reduction of 10s. per quarter would be most injurious, if not altogether fatal, to the interests of landlord and tenant; but in his (Earl Stanhope's) opinion, the reduction caused by the Bill before them would not be less than 20s. per quarter. A noble Lord, whose speech he had listened to with great attention, had stated that taxation and the wages of labour were the great elements of price, and that as both were higher in this country than on the Continent, the price of articles similar to theirs, must be higher here than there. But Sir Robert Peel went further, and said that a large debt and heavy taxation seemed, in his opinion, to justify and require cheapness of

prices. Nothing could be more absurd. It was contradicted by the universal experience of all ages and of all countries. Nay, the very reverse was the case. He challenged any man to produce an instance of any country in which wages and prices were uniformly low, in which even the most despotic monarchs had been able to raise a large amount of taxation. He did not deny that it was possible to reduce the price of corn; but that could only be done by reducing the amount of taxation to such a degree as to prevent the possibility of maintaining their obligations to the public creditor. They had been told a great deal about the beneficial effects flowing from the application of capital and skill, and were assured that by an improved system of cultivation, by increased habits of industry, and by the expenditure of more money, the English farmer would overcome all the dangers which surrounded him. The agriculturist had been told that he could and ought to grow five quarters of corn where but three were now raised; but he thought such a recommendation came with a very bad grace from those men who, when the agriculturists were in distress, coldly assured them that misfortune arose from superabundance of protection. He denied altogether the false and scandalous imputation, that the English farmers were deficient in either skill, perseverance, or industry. In this country, the farmers, as compared with the growers elsewhere, had all the disadvantages of climate and soil to contend with, yet they produced a greater quantity of grain from the same area than any foreigner, even greater than the Hollander, whose industry and perseverance were objects of general admiration. But where was the inducement for the farmer to increase his exertions, to invest his money, or to exercise his skill? Surely it was not by taking from him all hope of obtaining a remunerating price for his corn—by exposing him to open competition with his continental neighbours, who had all the advantages of cheap labour and a low amount of taxation. But even suppose the farmer were to increase his produce, was it not perfectly clear he would be the loser, unless he increased it in proportion to the falling off in price which the measure would occasion? The advantage of the farmer did not merely consist in having abundant crops, but in having a good and a ready market, and a fair remunerating price. But there was one other consideration con-

nected with this measure which he wished to impress in a particular manner on their Lordships, and which he thought ought to be regarded as a decisive objection to it. What would be the fate of the small occupiers of land both in Great Britain and in Ireland—he meant of those who cultivated small farms? It must be admitted, upon all hands, that this was a most valuable, a most important, a most meritorious class. They were eminently distinguished by their conduct and by their character, by social and public virtue. They occupied an intermediate position between the labourers and the large farmers. There could be no doubt, if this measure became a law, that these poor men must be replaced by others. Gracious Heaven! was that the system on which they meant to act? Was it really their Lordships' determination to drive from their homes—to consign to destitution and despair—millions of their deserving fellow countrymen in Great Britain and in Ireland? If such was their intention, let it be generally known, so that these poor people might be really apprised of their danger. And again, what would become of the retail dealers throughout the country—what would become of the shopkeeper in the rural districts, whose best and almost only customer was the class which this Bill would destroy? And would not the destruction of these classes react with terrible effect on the manufacturer, who would not be able to sell his goods in the home market, because the scheme which he had originated and blindly urged on had destroyed his former customers? The noble Earl who brought forward the measure (the Earl of Ripon) asked what land would be thrown out of cultivation, whether any and what land would be so thrown out? A little reflection would have enabled the noble Lord himself to have resolved both questions. Much of the land was of poor soil, or land which was not so bad in many cases poor tenants; now, the occupiers of these two species of land constituted a great bulk of the agricultural community; and would not the measure be hurtful to both? The one required, from the nature of the soil, an increased expenditure; the other, by reason of their poverty, could not subsist without adequate remuneration. He thought the misfortunes which had occurred in 1830 and in 1842 were nothing as compared to those which the present measure would entail. He was aware that many who voted for this measure, both in

this and in the other House of Parliament, alleged as a reason for so doing, that it was inevitable. These men were convinced that it would be prejudicial and destructive in the highest degree to the interest of this country; but yet, strange to say, they would vote for the measure on the ground of its necessity. That was like arguing that, because death was inevitable, they ought to commit suicide. He had no hesitation in saying, that such motives were base and servile, and unworthy of legislators. Everybody must lament the wreck of public character and public confidence which had occurred on this question. A great political crime had been committed; and those who had committed it urged in justification of themselves, that it was impossible to prevent its consummation. It was said by the right hon. Gentleman by whose counsels this country had the great misfortune to be governed—a misfortune with which he had reason to believe and hope it would not be afflicted many days longer—that it was desirable to terminate the present conflict. So ignorant was that right hon. Gentleman of the signs of the times, or what he might have read in history, that he knew not that the effect of this unwise, unjust, and unnecessary concession would be to render the conflict fiercer and more formidable than ever. They would see drawn out in array all the productive classes of the country, whatever branch of industry they were engaged in, whether manufactures or agriculture, and they would form a formidable and, as the result would prove, an invincible phalanx. One noble Lord opposite seemed to exult greatly at the prospect of the ease and tranquillity he should enjoy at finding what he supposed to be the end of the agitation. In his (Earl Stanhope's) opinion, it was but the commencement. When the pressure began to be felt, then would the din of war be heard. Was the noble Lord so prejudiced as to suppose that the productive classes of this country would be plundered without a determined and resolute resistance—a resistance not violent, not by force of arms, but that passive resistance which ultimately no Government, however powerful, could overcome? Talk of this being an end to the question! Undoubtedly they would no longer have an Anti-Corn-Law League, but the same machinery would be employed. The same means, the same exertions would be directed to other and different objects, and with the same success. It had been avowed

by that League that they had ulterior objects; and a principal member of that body, who also was in these enlightened times a Member of the House of Commons, had stated that his object was to level with the dust the aristocracy of England. He said then, if they made this base, this unworthy, and unwarrantable concession to clamour, the same agitation would be continued and increased for the attainment of those ulterior objects. At the time of the Reform Bill the noble Duke near him (the Duke of Wellington) asked "how the Government was to be carried on?" Now he (Earl Stanhope) thought the noble Duke might have received an answer from one of his own Colleagues. To answer that question, it was only necessary for him to watch attentively the conduct pursued by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government. "How was the Government to be conducted?" How had it been conducted? Why, by basely, meanly, and pusillanimously crouching to the party who appeared to be the stronger, and by trampling upon those who appeared to be the weaker. If such had been the conduct pursued by that illustrious and immortal Minister, Mr. Pitt, who was truly described as the "pilot who weathered the storm," this country would have had, could have had, no other fate than that of becoming either a republic, or a province of the French Empire—such was the premium offered to agitation; such the encouragement by the Minister of the day to that organized agitation which existed in Ireland as well as in this country. As far as Ireland was concerned, he believed that being essentially agricultural, and depending on the English market for the sale of its produce, the effect of the Bill under consideration must, at no distant period, be the Repeal of the Union. There was not an Irish farmer—nay, a common cottier, who held the smallest quantity of land, who would not feel that the Repeal of the Union, whatever else might be the evils attending upon it, though it involved the spoliation of the Protestant Church Establishment itself, and the accomplishment of the wildest projects of the great agitator, would still have this advantage, that an independent Irish Parliament would grant effectual protection to Irish industry. It was that that had induced the great agitator of Ireland to give his support to this measure; he was perfectly well aware that it would promote more effectually and speedily the object he

had always had in view—the Repeal of the Union. With respect to Canada being favourable to this measure, he could refer their Lordships to the recent intelligence from that country, to the Address to Her Majesty from the Legislative Assembly, as well as to the excellent and instructive letters written by Mr. Buchanan, which could not be perused without feeling a deep conviction of their truth, in contradiction of that statement. But whatever were the objections to this Bill, according to the doctrine which had recently been maintained, that House was bound to pass it, because it had been proposed by the Ministers of the Crown, and approved by the House of Commons. Such an unconstitutional doctrine as that had never to his knowledge been proclaimed within the walls of either House of Parliament. Admit such a doctrine as that, and the independence of the House of Lords was at an end, its constitutional functions were destroyed! It would become and would be considered by the country as of no utility whatever. Nay, more, it would not only be regarded as useless, but as positively injurious to the best interests of the country. There would then arise, throughout the length and breadth of the land, a general cry for the abolition of the House; and when the aristocratical branch of the Legislature was once destroyed, they might depend upon it that the monarchical branch would soon follow! Before they decided on the passing of this Bill into a law, he conjured their Lordships to weigh well the opinion which the country would naturally and justly form of this House. It appeared that conversions to the Ministerial scheme were not limited to one side of the House; for the Noble Viscount opposite (Viscount Melbourne) gave a vote a few nights ago in favour of a measure which he himself, when he held the reins of power, represented as one of the wildest and maddest which the mind of man had ever conceived. In 1842, only five Members of their Lordships' House pronounced an opinion in favour of this measure; but now, in 1846, without any new facts and arguments being adduced, and without any change of circumstances, no less than 211 Peers had voted for the second reading of it. What opinion could be formed of such conduct, and what fate would their Lordships deserve and receive, when, having been weighed in the balance, they were found wanting? The step they had already

taken, fortunately, was not the last, and it was yet within their power to save themselves from indelible disgrace, and their country from utter destruction. But if it persevered in the course it took on the second reading of the Bill, the vote it then gave would be the death-warrant of that House, and the time was not far distant when the country with a voice of thunder would demand the execution of that warrant. It had been said, that public opinion had changed upon this subject. But how had that been proved? Why in every instance in which the country had had an opportunity of expressing its opinion upon the question at elections that had recently taken place, it had been in opposition to this Bill. Let it not be supposed that the great principle of protection was not approved of by the majority of their Lordships. Those who thought so were entirely mistaken. He believed, that if they were to vote by ballot on that measure, the protection party would carry their opinions in both Houses by an immense majority. If it were possible to take the opinions of the House of Commons in that way, the great majority—voting by ballot—would decide in favour of the principle of protection; and he was informed by those who were competent judges on the subject, that if their Lordships were tried by a similar test, that not twenty Peers would be found giving their vote in favour of the measure. The Prime Minister of the country had spent ten years in creating a party, on the principle of protection, which in ten days he had shivered into fragments, and scattered to the winds. Another party had now been created, whose existence would be enduring, as their principles were built upon a rock that could not be shaken by the waves. In the course of a few weeks, without any previous preparation or organization of purpose, 240 enlightened, intelligent, and patriotic Members of Parliament had united together upon the bond of public principle—and who had the advantage of having a noble Lord as their leader, whose public support and superior talents did honour to the party with which he was connected, and to whom, although he had not the pleasure of being personally known, he was anxious to tender his homage and respect. Let it always be recollected, he said, that if their Lordships wished to preserve their political existence—if they wished to preserve that which constituted political power, which, when once lost they

could never regain—he meant the confidence of the people—unless they could contemplate without dismay the discredit that must necessarily arise from the measure as a whole, it was their duty to resist it unless they were willing to dismember the Empire, and bring down an irremediable destruction upon the country, and ultimately consent to the destruction of the monarchy itself. He would therefore move, as an Amendment, that their Lordships should go into Committee that day six months.

The EARL OF ESSEX said, that the noble Lord had argued as if the produce of this country was sufficient to meet the demand, and he would inquire, if such was the case, how was it that they at present imported so large a quantity of foreign grain into this country? It was perfectly clear, that the home supply was inadequate to meet the demand; and he contended that, if grain could be procured at a cheaper rate, the demand would be considerably increased. In reference to what had fallen from the noble Earl on the subject of those who had changed their opinions on the question, he repudiated the imputation that they had been actuated by sordid or servile motives; and declared that, so far as he was concerned, if the opinions of their Lordships should be taken by means of the ballot—he declared, in the presence of his God, that, if there should be only twenty Peers found voting in favour of the measure, he would be one of that twenty.

The EARL OF STANHOPE explained, and denied having used the term “sordid.” He did not attribute such motives to the noble Earl, as he could not know his thoughts; but when he found such a number of persons in both Houses of Parliament expressing their opinions against the principle of the Bill, and yet voting for it, he could not but think that their conduct was somewhat servile.

The EARL OF RADNOR said, that he hoped to produce such arguments as would induce the House to pass this Bill without alteration. As to the apprehensions of the noble Earl, he did not lay such stress upon them as he would have done if he had not heard the noble Earl in former years make similar prophecies, which had not been fulfilled. For himself he had nothing to explain, for he had uniformly supported similar measures; but he could find other motives than baseness and servility for those who had

altered their opinions. Neither was it his duty to say anything in support of Sir Robert Peel, who had friends enough in that House to defend him; but the insinuations against the right hon. Baronet were unfounded; for what motive could he have had in proposing this measure, and making great sacrifices for it, except the most honourable? But when a charge was made against an hon. Friend of his (Mr. Bright) for what he might have said at Covent-garden, he thought that, with the provocation given, persons might have used expressions which could not in cooler moments be justified. As an example of the abuse used against his friends, he might refer to a report in *The Times* of a meeting in Dorsetshire, in which it was said that Mr. Cobden "was properly called the Devil, for he was the father of lies." And the expression of his hon. Friend as to putting an end to the domination of the hereditary peerage, and overwhelming it in the dust, alluded only to the domination with which the aristocracy was standing up for the Corn Law, which he (the Earl of Radnor) maintained was most unjust. But then it was said that agitation would continue: he must say this was not the first time agitation had prevailed; it had prevailed on other occasions; but no agitation would ever prevail unless the good sense of the people went along with the object. If the Government did not adopt measures which were called for by common sense, reason, and the general voice of the country, the people must either obtain them by agitation, or they must do without them. That was the case with respect to Catholic Emancipation, and that was the case with respect to this Bill; and if the League should continue agitation for an improper purpose, it would no more prevail than agitation now prevailed for the Repeal of the Union. Next, it was said that the Bill was founded on theory, and in practice could not be successful; but theory was only tested by practice, and if practice did not prove it to be good, the theory was bad; theory was only the rationale of practice. He said, then, that those who supported the protectionists were the wildest theorists. For thirty years they had in theory promised to benefit the farmers, and yet in practice they had never done so. The practice had proved that their theory was bad: they had been carried away by the word "protection," and nothing else. In fact, the sliding scale men were the wildest theorists

that had ever been seen in England; while the principles of free trade, wherever they had been tried, had been found perfectly successful in practice. The noble Duke (the Duke of Cleveland) had dwelt upon the effect of this measure on the small tenantry; and he had told the House that he had on one of his estates tenants of that class whose families had been on the land for 450 years, and he had asked why he should be obliged to turn them off the land; but it struck him (the Earl of Radnor) that these small tenants, whose ancestors were serfs to the ancestors of the noble Duke, had not thriven much under a system of protection, for they were probably at present little better off than the serfs their ancestors. Then he did not see why the noble Duke should turn them off the land in consequence of this measure. If the country generally was benefited by it, these persons would be sharers in the common good. At any rate, the noble Duke had no right to wish to be charitable to them at the expense of the people of England. It was said that we could not contend, if this Bill passed, with the low wages and low food of the Poles; but if so, how was it that we had competed successfully against the low wages and low living of Ireland? He had never heard that question answered, or any explanation how it was that we could not compete with a country thirteen days' sail from us, when we competed successfully with a country thirteen hours' sail from us, in precisely similar circumstances of fertility, cheapness of labour, and lowness of food. Appeals had been made to the antiquity of the Corn Laws; and their Lordships had been warned to adhere to the wisdom of their ancestors with respect to them. Now it was true that this country had had Corn Laws since the reign of King John; but every one of these laws, with the exception of one, the 3rd Edward IV., cap. 2, which the noble Lord (Lord Stanley) referred to in the late debate, up to the period when the landed interest obtained greater power in Parliament, had been laws not for protection, but for providing food for the people. That Act, the 3rd Edward IV., cap. 2, prohibited the importation of corn up to a certain price; but if the noble Lord had looked a little further, he would have found that chapter 4, of the same year, also prohibited the importation of all articles of manufacture whatever from abroad. This country was to have no communication with foreign

countries for the supply of its wants; it was to be self-dependent: was the noble Lord prepared to go that length? The noble Earl then quoted, from the *Paston Letters*, some expressions in a letter (written about the same period) of Dame Margaret Paston to her son Sir John, stating that malt was very dear, and wheat was 8s. 8d. a quarter, and that the king had prohibited the exportation of wheat, and ending with the remark, "I fear we shall have a right strange world," for the purpose of showing that exportation was forbidden as well as importation; and then went through the titles of various statutes up to the reign of Charles II., to show that all the legislation up to that period on this subject had been, not for protection, but with a view of providing food for the people. When the landed interest got the upper hand in Parliament, a new system was introduced, and the idea of protection began to be acted on. An Act was passed in the 12th year of the reign of Charles II., imposing duties on the importation of corn, and another in the 15th year, by which those duties were increased. At that time it was confessed without scruple that the object of these Acts was to keep up the rent of land. This was not so openly confessed at present; but there could be little doubt that protection was desired for that purpose. Then came the system of bounties upon exportation in the reign of William and Mary, by which the gross injustice was perpetrated, that not only was the price of food raised, but a tax was laid upon the people for the advantage of the owners of land. Under this system, exportation, of course, took place to a large extent. Between six and seven millions of money was paid in the shape of bounties, and upwards of 2,000,000 quarters of wheat exported. Owing, he presumed, to the increase in the population, in 1750 exportation began to decrease, and from that period it went on constantly diminishing until we became an importing country, and as such we had gone on gradually increasing up to the present time. One would imagine, to hear the arguments on the other side of the House, that the natural state was a state of restriction, and that commercial freedom was a mere experiment, whereas it was just the very reverse of this. The Corn Laws were an experiment, and the natural state was a state of freedom. It was Paine, he believed, who, in one of his publications, speaking of the plan of a sinking fund

for paying the national debt, said it was like a man with a wooden leg running after a hare—the faster he ran, the wider they were apart. And so it was with protection—the more they increased protection, the further were they from benefiting agriculture. It was said the present measure would benefit merely the manufacturing interest. He denied this, and thought it would benefit both the agricultural and manufacturing interest; but he maintained, that even if it were true that the manufacturing interest alone would be benefited by it, the landed interest ought to give it their best support. In the first place, he would remark that it was said on the other side that the landed interest was by far the largest and most important in the country. He denied that it was so, and appealed to the Population Returns in proof of his assertion.

The DUKE OF RICHMOND said, that the Population Returns were not true.

The EARL OF RANDOR replied, that the Returns were prepared with great care, and that he had no doubt of their perfect accuracy.

The DUKE OF RICHMOND said, that what he meant was, that in the last Population Returns every man was returned as a manufacturer who belonged to any trade or handicraft, though supported by the agriculturists; for instance, every tradesman in a country village was put down as a manufacturer.

The EARL OF RADNOR repeated his belief in the perfect accuracy of the Returns, and proceeded to say, that in 1811 it appeared that the agriculturists amounted to 35 per cent. of the population; in 1821 they were only 33 per cent.; in 1831 they were reduced to 28 per cent.; and in 1841 they were still further diminished to 22 per cent. Had the agricultural population in 1841 borne the same proportion to the other classes of the population as they did in 1811, they would have consisted of 2,445,500 more persons than at present. The consequence would have been, that the agricultural interest would have had so many more persons to support; and, as these would generally have been of the poorer sort of persons, an additional poor rate of nearly 1,000,000*l.* would necessarily have been thrown upon the agriculturists. From this additional payment, however, they had been relieved by the diminution of the agricultural population. The noble Earl also entered into calculations to show, that from the same cause

the agricultural interest had been relieved of 6,500,000*l.* of other taxes, which would have fallen upon them had they continued to bear the same proportion to the other classes of the population in 1841 as they did in 1811. He said, therefore, that even if there was no reason in the justice of the case why the Corn Laws ought to be taken off the landed interest, they ought to do any thing rather than injure the manufacturer. But he maintained that, on the ground of justice alone, the measure ought to be supported. When the Canada Corn Bill was before that House, he (the Earl of Radnor) opposed it, because it was a departure from the principles of free trade; and he felt, what had since come to pass, that it would create interests which at a future time would be used against the principle of free trade. Wherever free trade had been really carried out, it had been successful, more particularly in the case of the shipping interest, woollens, and silks. The noble Lord (Lord Stanley) had argued that there had been a falling off in the Baltic timber trade, but that had been amply made up by the greater increase in the general shipping trade. From 1842 to 1845 the increase had been from 563,000 tons to 1,114,000 tons. The same results had followed with regard to the articles of the Tariff, on which reductions had been made. The principles of free trade were no longer an experiment; they had been tried for nearly five years in this country, and with the greatest success. He was prepared to support the measure throughout.

THE EARL OF WICKLOW was rather surprised that up to this time no one connected with Ireland had risen to address the House on the question under consideration. The sentiments which he entertained on this subject were different from those held by those with whom he was generally accustomed to vote, and therefore he thought it incumbent on him to make a few observations. He believed the head of the Government had brought forward this measure from no other motive than that of promoting the public good; but he (the Earl of Wicklow) was persuaded that no advantage that could arise from the passing of the measure could recompense the country for the loss of character which public men would sustain by it. He did not envy that man his constitution of mind who, having for thirty years consistently pursued one course of policy with regard to a measure of this kind, could afterwards

turn round and declare that the very measure which during that period he had been opposing with all his vigour and ability, was now necessary for the public welfare. It was impossible the great Conservative party in this country could a second time pardon an act of this kind. On one occasion they had done so with much difficulty; but the guilt of turning round and deserting those who were his followers, appeared to him (the Earl of Wicklow) to be an act which it was impossible to forgive. It was with deep regret he said this, because on account of this circumstance he believed the administration of the existing Government was at an end altogether. The betrayal of confidence was not confined to the Minister; it extended to those who had deserted their principles without affording their constituents an opportunity of saying whether they approved or disapproved of their conduct. The hour of retribution, however, was not far distant; and many of those Gentlemen who had deserted their principles would soon have an opportunity of pondering in retirement on the course they had pursued as public men. There was another point growing out of this matter. If any Peers had left proxies with the Government, in the belief that they intended to act on the principle of protection, and if these parties had not had means of communicating their wishes on this measure—he did not know that there were any noble Lords in this situation, there might be—and if their proxies were given for it, those Peers would have been betrayed. He was not aware of any such proxies having been brought forward; but he knew that the name of the noble Lord the Governor of Canada had been removed from the proxy list, in consequence of the opinions which he had given in public. On the subject of protection, he (the Earl of Wicklow) differed from most of his noble Friends with whom he voted. He conceived that protection to British industry was not necessary, because our manufacturing industry had been brought to such a state of perfection that it could compete with all the world. And he also believed that there was no country in the world in which agriculture was carried to greater perfection than in England. He thought all the industrious classes of this country capable of competing with all the world; and therefore it was the duty of the Government of this country to support the principle of free trade. But he thought their Lordships and the Government of the country would

find very great difficulty in persuading other nations to follow our example. There were two things which appeared to him to be absolutely necessary to enable this country to adopt the principles of free trade. One of these was within our own power and scope—he meant perfect justice and impartiality in the mode in which free-trade principles were carried out; and the other was reciprocity on the part of foreign countries. It was for the want of these qualities in this particular Bill that he objected to it. It was not because it did not contain the principle of free trade, but because it did not carry out that principle justly and fairly. If the farmers of this country were to have to compete with foreigners, what right had the Government to deprive them of those advantages with regard to the necessities of life generally, which in the article of bread was conceded to all other consumers? Why should the farmers of this country pay a high price for their tea, coffee and sugar? This was an injustice that would act most oppressively upon them. As long as the Legislature continued to tax those articles which were so necessary for the consumption of the people, they had no right to say to them “you shall compete with foreign nations with regard to your agriculture.” On these grounds he thought some amendments ought to be made in this Bill. So long as the Government derived a revenue from their Customs, that revenue would act as a protection; and the same degree of protection should, by right and justice, be extended to the farming interests of this country. But there was another object to be attained, which it appeared to him was indispensable for carrying out the principles of free trade. He might be sneered at by the political economists for saying it; but he thought it absolutely necessary that there should be a reciprocity with other nations. We were told that that would follow as a matter of course; that if we adopted just principles, other nations would find it to be their interest to tread in our steps. He believed the direct contrary would be the case. If the object of this country was to get Europe and America to adopt free-trade principles, the proper course would be not to abandon protection until they agreed to adopt the principles of free trade; if this country did otherwise, the whole advantage arising from free trade would be pocketed by foreign countries. If the Customs duties were reduced, the increased consumption

might be productive of an increased revenue; but if the duties were taken off altogether, something else should be substituted for them. Other countries, by keeping up their duties, or by putting on as much as we took off, would keep themselves in the same relative position in which they were previously, and the advantage of the reductions made by us would be exclusively enjoyed by them. It was quite clear that under such a system the people of England would have to pay a heavy income tax to support the revenue of foreign countries. Was that a state of things which the farmers of this country ought to tolerate? He was aware that there were various reasons which induced noble Lords to vote for this Bill; but it was the first time in his long Parliamentary experience that he had seen two parties voting for a measure of which they entirely disapproved. Men must be party men; but he defied any one to show him, from the history of this country, any transaction like this. Last year, the whole of the Whigs and Conservatives were protectionists, and they only differed as to the mode of carrying out their views. The noble Marquess opposite (the Marquess of Lansdowne) shook his head; but he was then a thorough protectionist, so far as a fixed duty was concerned.

The MARQUESS OF LANSDOWNE: For the purpose of revenue.

The EARL OF WICKLOW: The noble Marquess was for an 8s. duty. Was that for revenue, or for protection?

The MARQUESS OF LANSDOWNE: Both.

The EARL OF WICKLOW recollected the noble Marquess saying he was in favour of the 8s. duty as a protection to agriculture. But if this measure was so desirable, why was the country to be deprived of this great benefit for three years? No Member of Her Majesty's Government had attempted to answer that question; but he should offer some conjecture upon it himself. In November last a very odd transaction occurred. The Government went out of office, and returned again without giving any explanation to the country. When questions were put in the early part of the Session, promises of explanation when the proper time arrived were made; but the time arrived, and explanations were not forthcoming. The three years' probation appeared to him to be thrown in as a sort of sop, to tranquillize the minds of the timid persons whose support would be of advantage to it. The principal grounds

for the Bill, as alleged by the Government, were, that it would serve as an effectual remedy for the apprehended potato famine in Ireland. But the statements put forth with respect to that calamity were very much exaggerated. The Government no doubt felt that there were abundant causes for alarm, for they sent people to Ireland to ascertain the extent of the evil; and those persons furnished reports which were the ridicule of the entire Irish peasantry, so absurd were their recommendations and suggestions; but, notwithstanding, the Government thought it the most opportune time to bring forward the measure. The measure might have remedied the evil, if it existed to the extent stated, by its coming into instant operation; but when three years' probation were proposed, the entire argument fell to the ground, because the evil that was sought to be remedied could not be cured by a measure that was not to come into operation for three years. With regard to the potato disease, he was happy to state that the Government had been completely and entirely met. He was sure that Government would now admit it; for the burden of their song had been, "Wait till the end of May or the month of June, and you will find that Ireland will be in an alarming state of destitution in consequence of the failure in the potato crop." Those periods had arrived; and as their predictions had not been verified, he hoped they would for the future forego the argument that the alarming state of Ireland was a sufficient reason for the sudden abrogation of protection. He confessed that his alarm at the withdrawal of protection was not merely on account of this country, but also on account of the Colonies. He believed the arguments adduced by the noble Earl at the Table (Earl Stanhope) was quite conclusive on this subject, that there were only two ways in which the Colonies could be useful to the mother country. Mr. Burke, whose authority it was rather out of fashion to quote, had said there were but two ways by which the Colonies could be useful to the mother country—either by taxation, or by a monopoly of their commerce. By the monopoly of commerce it had been laid down that benefit could be derived from the Colonies; but how could the Colonies, Canada for instance, be of service to the mother country, if neither of the principles of taxation or monopoly were to be exercised? They might be expensive, and it was probable they might be the cause of involving the mother country

in a war; but of what service could they be in return, if they were told that they should have no protection for their commerce, while they were expected to give the monopoly of their trade? He had been credibly informed that the United States were now able to compete successfully with Manchester. Now, if that were the case, how would it fare with Canada and the other Colonies? What would become of the shipping trade? What would become of their seamen? The noble Lord opposite (Earl Grey) had said that the Colonies, though labouring under the disadvantages entailed upon them by the withdrawal of protection, would be satisfied with the proud consciousness that they belonged to England, and that that boast would be held a sufficient equivalent for the loss they might sustain. He believed that no such feeling existed among the colonists; for however attached the weak ones might be, others better able to protect themselves would feel greater pride in being independent; and, thinking the mother country no longer of advantage, would perceive that their best course would be to make themselves altogether independent of her. He might be an erroneous prophet, and he sincerely hoped that the sequel might prove it; but he could not help expressing his opinion that, should this measure pass into law, before the expiration of five years, Canada would no longer be a dependence of the British Empire. But the question had to be viewed in another of its bearings. Upon a previous occasion, when the Bill was passing through some of its stages in the other House, an hon. Member in opposition put a question to the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, "What do you intend to do with the tithes-rent charge?" And the reply was, "I don't mean to make any alteration, because I don't expect any diminution of price." He would pass by the question of the absurdity of expecting that benefit could be derived, where there would be no diminution of price; for upon a fall in price the entire argument depended. But he would pass on to another observation made by the right hon. Baronet on the occasion of the second reading of the Bill, which had forcibly struck him. The right hon. Baronet said that he would admit the measure might press heavily upon those who might have their estates burdened, but that the great benefit to the country generally would be more than a counter-balance. Now, he would inquire how those

landed proprietors who had their estates burdened could be injured, if there were not to be any diminution of prices? He mentioned these things to show the contradictory nature of the arguments adduced by the supporters of the Bill, and in proof of the ignorance that existed among statesmen who undertook to legislate in matters of this kind. He implored their Lordships to pause before they came to any hasty determination upon a matter of such immense importance. Let them remember that although the Bill had received a second reading, such sanction was not conclusive. The present question was not to be put in comparison with the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829. It was true that noble Lords changed their opinions very suddenly then, but they were justified in so doing; for not only had they before their eyes—though that might not have influenced them then, as he regretted to say it seemed to do now—a sudden change of opinion in the Government of the day; but the more powerful argument that the House of Commons had in successive Parliaments sanctioned the measure. But how stood the case now? Was there ever a measure of so important a character as the present carried the first time that it was proposed? It was an erroneous idea that the country approved of the measure and required its enactment. There was no such expectation in the country generally; and he hoped the House would not quietly surrender its judgment because a few clamorous agitators made a noise. The people of the country were tranquil, because they confided in the wisdom of their Lordships' decisions. Let them not be disappointed. They looked to their Lordships for protection, and appealed to them whether, because the League were clamorous, and many of them possessing great powers of debate, that they alone constituted the people of the country. They were no such thing; and he hoped the House would adopt such an amendment as would serve to defeat the measure, at least for the present Session. He was convinced that the Government which was to succeed the present—and he supposed in a short time—would raise itself in the estimation of the country, and obtain the attachment of the people by a compromise, which would be satisfactory to all parties. The Leaguers might be a little clamorous at first; but he would put it to the noble Lord himself (Lord Radnor), whether, six months ago, he would not

have been delighted to have got a Bill with a small fixed duty? The noble Lord concluded by expressing his intention, when in Committee, to propose a fixed duty of 5s. as one likely to conciliate all parties.

LORD LYTTELTON, with their Lordships' permission, was anxious to address some observations on the subject before the House, so far as regarded their colonial possessions. His noble Friend the President of the Board of Trade had adverted to this branch of the question, and he (Lord Lyttelton) owed an apology to the House for again referring to it; but representing, as he did, the Colonial Department in that House, he felt he could not avoid referring to it. On this subject generally he was certainly satisfied, as he thought probably many of their Lordships would be, that in a matter of this kind the Colonies must needs follow in the wake of the mother country, and partake in the system adopted by her. If the great interests of this country required that the trade in corn should be free, it would be manifestly impossible for the Colonies not to be participators of the same system. Except there was a system of bounties on colonial produce, which would, he thought, find few supporters, he did not see how the Colonies should be exempt from the same law under which the mother country was placed. He should endeavour to lay before their Lordships some grounds for the Bill, and to show that those of their Colonies that were interested in this question need be under no apprehension about the result of this measure. The Colonies that were interested were only some of their Australian Colonies and Canada. He said "some" of their Australian Colonies; for, with reference to New South Wales, it was a country which imported wheat for its consumption; it was a country of very great and rapidly increasing prosperity, and the capital and interest of its inhabitants took the direction of pastoral occupation. On both these grounds New South Wales would be more and more an importing country of wheat; and on that ground its neighbours that had wheat to export would find New South Wales a better market for their wheat than this country. With reference to Van Diemen's Land and South Australia, they need be under no apprehension from the result of free trade. During the years 1843 and 1844 in one of those Colonies the average price was 26s. per quarter; in the other, something about 28s. The freight thence to

this country would be about 20s. per quarter, which brought up the price at which they could sell their wheat here to about 47s. or 48s. This low amount would enable them to compete with the markets of other countries; and those Colonies had besides a natural protection, which he thought he put down at a very low rate when he put it down at 10s. a quarter, resulting from the incomparable quality of their produce. He had not practical knowledge on this subject; but he had lately seen some wheat coming from South Australia, and he was convinced that not one of their Lordships, with more ample knowledge on the subject, had ever seen wheat to compare with that South Australian wheat. Now, with reference to the most prominent interest involved in this question—namely, the Canadian question—in the first place, everything that had been alleged on the side of the opponents of this Bill with reference to the interests of Canada was no more than was alleged with reference to every single interest that ever was affected by an alteration in the customs duties. In the year 1842, when the Tariff was under discussion, the representatives of every single interest supposed to be affected visited the Board of Trade, to lay before his right hon. Friend who was then Vice President a statement on paper of the certain and inevitable ruin which the proposed Tariff would bring on those interests; and some of their Lordships might have seen a pamphlet which was published by Mr. Gladstone, showing that all those anticipations had been falsified—that those trades remained as they had been, or had received a considerable increase. Had the Canada interest gone backward from that period? No, it had not. Those who were interested in the Canadian timber trade, asserted that the reduction of 20s. a load in the differential duties would bring destruction on their trade. That was in 1842; but the President of the Board of Trade laid a statement before them the other day respecting that trade, and it appeared that in the last year the price of Canadian timber, which for two or three years after that alteration had been lower, giving the consumer the whole benefit of the reduction, had, in consequence of the increase of the demand, concurrently with the increase in consumption, recovered its former amount. It was to be hoped that a similar result with respect to the Canadas would attend this measure. And to show that there were

good grounds for that hope, he would lay before their Lordships some considerations drawn from the nature of the case itself. And first, he would refer to the feelings of the Canadians themselves, though he could not refuse to admit, that, in doing so, he was arguing the question under great disadvantages, in consequence of the Address which had been received from the Canadian Legislature, and which had been so often referred to in the course of the debate. In admitting that, however, he did not know if there were any occasion for him to make the same disclaimer which had been made by the noble President of the Board of Trade, as to any knowledge respecting the existence of that document. It was well known that the Canadian mail was not due till the 29th of each month—it was received late; and on the occasion in question, the contents of the mail were not known till ten o'clock on the following morning. He had admitted that he laboured under disadvantages from the fact of the existence of that Address from the Canadas; but he knew that the whole tone and purport of that Address were entirely inconsistent with the occurrences which had taken place in the Canadian Legislature. He had been informed, and was enabled to state on the best authority, that the Address had been passed most unexpectedly. If any noble Lord would take the trouble to refer to the reports of the debate, or rather of the “no debate,” on the occasion of the Address being carried, they would see that there was very little argument indeed. The Motion for the Address was carried just before the mail went out. It was moved by Mr. Holmes in a very few words, that a Committee should be appointed to consider the Address; and not one word was said in the reports in the newspapers beyond the fact of the appointment of that Committee. It might be said that this showed the unanimity of the Legislative Assembly on the question; but if any of their Lordships would take the trouble of reading the full and complete report of the debate which took place on the Premier's Resolutions, it appeared to him (Lord Lytton) that he would necessarily participate in the surprise which the adoption of the Address had, he was bound to say, caused to Her Majesty's Government. The Address was altogether unexpected; and the Members of Her Majesty's Government could not but think that the next mail would bring some document of a

different character. The resolutions which were carried certainly had not gone the whole way in any affirmation or approval of the policy of Her Majesty's Government; but he would refer to it with the greatest confidence, as a proof that the Canadians were ready to accept that policy in a spirit of manliness and resolution. Above all, he had the highest authority for saying that the bare idea of the measures of Her Majesty's Ministry having caused, or being likely to cause, the slightest diminution in the spirit of loyalty among the Canadians, was as wild and absurd as any in the world. Whatever disapproval had been expressed by persons of eminence in Canada, it had not taken the line of disapproval of the present measure as it was, but showed that those who felt that apprehension were alarmed, unless this measure were accompanied by others in the same direction. Their Lordships would see there was a great difference between total disapproval, and such qualified opposition as that. The speech of Mr. Merritt, who brought forward certain resolutions conceived in this spirit, in an address of great ability and length, so far from disapproving of this measure, entered with great talent on a consideration of the arguments and policy of the First Minister of the Crown, and concluded in these words:—

"With these resources at command, why should we not avail ourselves of the accidental and natural advantages we possess, and promptly follow this great movement; which, happily, has been introduced under the sanction of the most eminent statesmen, in the greatest nation of the present day?"

He would also refer, in support of that statement, to the proceedings of the great meeting held at Montreal, soon after the debate. To any noble Lord who had read the report of these proceedings, he would appear justified in relying on them as an additional proof of what he had said. A resolution had been proposed in favour of the measure, which, however, had not been carried—it had been defeated by a very small majority. But he would call the attention of the House to the words of the resolution which had been carried. It stated—

"That, whilst this meeting has in view the ultimate establishment of free trade in this Colony, it nevertheless, if hereafter found necessary, will use its influence to ensure the continuance of such protective duties on our produce going into the markets of Great Britain and Ireland as the Imperial Parliament, in its wisdom and justice, may now or hereafter see fit to enact for the welfare

and prosperity of this country. In the mean time, however, this meeting is of opinion the dangers apprehended from the change of system may only be met by a wise and timely adjustment of depending interests to suit the altered circumstances of her relations with the mother country."

It would be seen from these words that the meeting evidently looked forward to the ultimate adoption, and that at no very distant period, of some further measures in addition to the present. Much stress had been laid on the first despatch of the Governor General on this subject. But that despatch was not intended to convey the deliberate sentiments of the Governor General himself, but was merely a representation of the views and arguments which had been laid before him in his official capacity on the question. So far from that being the case, he was enabled to say that the Governor General did not hold these opinions in their full extent, though he certainly did anticipate some, though not very serious detriment to the Colony unless other measures of a similar character were carried. As far as their feelings were concerned, he would show that the Canadians needed not to be under any apprehension as to the effect of the measure. Mr. Cayley, the Inspector General, who was the Finance Minister of Canada, made certain calculations on the price of corn from the time it was shipped at Ontario till its arrival in Great Britain, and came to the conclusion that it might be landed in England for 40s. He (Lord Lyttelton) believed that one or two items had been placed too low; but he had received calculations in detail from Mr. Gillespie, a leading Canadian merchant, who viewed this measure without apprehension, from which it would appear that corn could be landed in Liverpool at 46s. a quarter. As to the question of competition with the United States, which formed the chief ground of apprehension as to the effect of the Ministerial measure, he was utterly at a loss to conceive how it could be asserted that the Canadians would not be able to compete with the Americans with respect to the corn trade in the English market. Why could not the people of Upper Canada compete with the Americans of the Western States? Their soil was about the same, the wages of labour were about the same, and the quality of the best Canadian wheat was equal to the best grain in England. He believed that the difference of freight between New York and England, as contrasted with the freight

between Quebec and England, was somewhat in favour of the Americans; but that advantage was counterbalanced by other considerations, and could, it might be safely said, be overcome by the enterprise and energy of the Canadians. There was very little shipbuilding in Canada, at present; but it was to be expected that they would hereafter apply their industry to that pursuit. Long before the present measure had been introduced, the whole question between the Canadas and America had been set forth in the Report of the Legislative Council of Canada, at a time when the great improvements had taken place in that country. That report, which was made in 1842, was strongly in favour of protection; but nevertheless it would appear from the details that the advantages of the St. Lawrence and the Hudson were very nearly balanced. It also stated that—

"After the enlargement of the Erie Canal shall have been completed, which is our most formidable rival, notwithstanding the reduction heretofore mentioned by the St. Lawrence, the cost of transportation through the two channels will be nearly equal."

He had seen a calculation in figures, with which he would not now trouble their Lordships, in reference to the two routes, one from Buffalo to New York by the Erie canal and Hudson river, and the other from the entrance of Welland Canal on Lake Erie to Montreal, in reference to transshipment, &c.; and in every one respect except the length of canal, the advantage was in favour of the Canadians. He would read to their Lordships the following extract from a despatch of his right hon. Friend (Mr. Gladstone) to Lord Cathcart, dated the 3rd of March, 1846, in reference to the advantages possessed by Canada:—

"Among them," stated the despatch, "I reckon her light taxation; the assistance she has received from British credit and funds, in the construction and improvement of her internal communications; her more regular and steady course of trade with this country; her low tariff, so favourable to importation, and, on that account, powerfully tending to encourage her reciprocal commerce outwards; some advantage in the point of proximity, as compared with the most westerly States of the Union, which are also her most formidable rivals in cheapness of production; and lastly, the means of carriage without transshipments by the St. Lawrence, which cannot be had by the way of the Erie Canal. She will likewise have this in her favour, that her corn trade will have become a settled one of some standing, with all its arrangements made and in full operation, while any regular commerce in that article from the United States must be a new creation, and must go through the processes at-

tending its self-adjustment to circumstances as yet untried; and if it be true that New York offers some advantages as compared with Montreal, particularly in regard to the rate of insurance, on the other hand I consider that the shipping of British North America has many advantages over that of the United States in the competition for freights, as it is constructed at a far less expense, and is, I must assume, navigated with equal vigour and equal economy."

He was not aware in what particular any part of that statement could be controverted. And what argument in opposition was brought forward in this Canadian Address which was now so much talked of? Only one, and that was, that the route by the St. Lawrence was frozen up six months in the year. But the same was nearly the case with the Erie Canal, which was the great route for American produce. He therefore thought that there was no doubt that, with reasonable efforts on the part of the Canadians, they could compete successfully with the Americans, especially as great improvements had recently taken place in Canadian agriculture by the application of increased capital and in other respects. Having said this much, he was not now willing, if he were able, to follow noble Lords at any length into a general disquisition of what was called the colonial system. He did not believe in the advantage or benefit of that system. He would not adopt any of the violent language of the Anti-Corn-Law League, and call it a system of mutual robbery; but it was a system of mutual privation and mutual impediment. These restrictions were either injurious or superfluous; injurious, if the protected produce could be more conveniently obtained from other places; superfluous, if it could not. Then they were asked—What are the use of Colonies, unless this system is maintained? It had been stated with a degree of fearlessness, for which he had scarcely given the noble Lord (Stanley) credit, that a monopoly was the only chance for our Colonies. He was ready to admit that it would not be easy to say what was the value of the colonial system in a pecuniary point of view. He had always considered that the Colonies were not so much to be regarded as of use in that light, as in providing an outlet for our superfluous population, and continuing the laws, habits, and institutions of this country to the furthest ends of the earth. This he had always considered to be the use of Colonies; and the way to preserve their attachment was by imparting to them the same freedom as

we enjoyed, and not by an adherence to a scanty remnant of a perishing system. This vaunted colonial system could hardly be said to exist but in name: it was against the interest of the mother country, and only nominally in favour of the Colonies. They had heard of the antiquity of this system; yet, however ancient it might be, it was not coeval with our early settlements. Our early charters with Virginia gave the inhabitants the power of free trade with all the world; and with respect to parts of this system—the system of timber duties, for instance—there was hardly one of their Lordships within whose lifetime that system had not begun. It commenced in 1808. Was there no actual example to prove the truth of what he was now stating? His right hon. Friend (Mr. Gladstone) had in his last despatch referred to the Australian Colonies. With respect to those great communities, which, owing to the incredible rapidity of their advance, were calculated to add to the glory of the English name, the system was hardly anything but nominal; and in regard to their most important and most abundant produce, that of wool, within the last few years the trade had been entirely thrown open, and the opening of the trade had been followed by an enormous increase in it, and had tended to the general prosperity of those Colonies.

The DUKE of BUCKINGHAM was not one of those who wished to attribute unworthy motives, or to use harsh terms towards those who had changed their opinions; at the same time he must be allowed, in the course of his observations, to refer to one or two speeches made by his friends upon the Treasury bench during the time he had the honour of being among them. The question now before their Lordships appeared to him to be this—whether, in the present circumstances of the country, they could carry out free-trade measures? The theory of free trade might be all very well; but he denied that the system of free trade could be practically carried out in this country. They were now called upon to open their ports to foreigners, and no longer to afford any protection to the English agriculturists. If they could place the agriculturists of this country in a similar situation to that of foreigners, and if they relieved them from the burdens with which they were overwhelmed, there would be some reason for insisting on the adoption of free-trade measures; but it was not

right or just to apply a system of free trade to this country, which was more heavily burdened with local and general taxation than any country in the world. If their Lordships thought that the farmers of this country, while they continued subject to these serious burdens, could successfully compete with foreigners, a few short years would suffice to convince them of their mistake. It was quite impossible for the English farmer, however practised he might be in agriculture, and however anxious to improve the cultivation of his land, to compete with the foreign farmer, who was not burdened with the same amount of local and general taxation. It had been stated that the farmers of this country were behindhand as compared with the farmers of other countries in their general system of cultivation; and it was said that a larger amount of capital ought to be expended on the improvement of the land. The English farmers were most anxious to apply their capital to the cultivation of the soil; but if their resources were crippled, as they must necessarily be by the present measure, they would be unable to carry out any improvements. Many tracts of wild and barren country had been brought into a high state of cultivation by the skill, and industry, and expenditure of the English farmer; but he contended that if the present measure was adopted, those large and valuable tracts of country would at once be thrown out of cultivation. There was, however, another point in connexion with this question to which he wished to direct their Lordships' attention—the reduction in the rate of labourers' wages which would necessarily ensue under the operation of this measure. They could not suppose, with the reduction in the price of corn which must be occasioned by this Bill, that the farmer could continue to afford his labourers the same rate of wages which he could now pay, while he obtained a remunerating price. If they reduced the profits of the farmer, the farmer must reduce the wages of the labourers whom he employed; and he considered that no greater misfortune could befall this country than a reduction of the wages of the rural population, which were not excessive, or such as in his opinion they ought to be. He considered also that the tithe question was another point deserving serious consideration in connexion with this question. Not many years ago an Act of Parliament was passed for the commutation of tithes, previously to which many petitions had been presented

to their Lordships, setting forth the great distress of the working clergy, and praying for an alteration of the tithe system. The tithe had been commuted, and those lands which were in the best cultivation paid the highest tithe; but what would be the effect of this free-trade measure? The working clergy of the country must make up their minds to a reduction in their incomes of not less than 25 per cent.; and he would ask their Lordships if they would wish to see the clergy placed in such a position? He might observe, while alluding to this point, that he had been glad to see that a great number of right rev. Prelates had the other night recorded their votes against this measure. It must not be forgotten that the agricultural interest was subject to peculiar and heavy burdens; and if their Lordships determined that free trade should be the order of the day, they ought, without delay, to relieve the landed proprietors from some of those burthens. For his own part, he would never cease to agitate this question till justice was done to the agricultural interest. They must not suppose that by their votes on this measure next week, or the week after, they would set this question at rest. On this point they must not deceive themselves. He would keep the question in agitation year after year; and he was satisfied that many noble Lords who agreed with him on this subject would not cease agitating till they gained some relief to the agriculturists. He believed that if he lived a few years longer, he would see the Minister of the day, to whichever party he might happen to belong, coming to that House and asking for a renewal of protection to the agricultural interest. The consequence of these free-trade measures must be to diminish the public revenue; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer would be under the absolute necessity of protecting the home market in order to make up for this reduction. In 1841 the noble Lord who was now President of the Board of Control (the Earl of Ripon), and with whom he (the Duke of Buckingham) then had the honour and gratification of voting, said, "He would show that the" then existing "Corn Law in its operation had not only not failed, but that it had produced the effects which it had been intended to produce." The noble Earl also said that "he could not divest himself of grave apprehensions if we were to depend on the importation from abroad for the main part of our supply, and neglect the cultivation of corn in our

own country; that we might find the difficulty" of obtaining a supply "aggravated every year;" and he added that, "on the supposition that the projects of the Government were carried into effect, no man could entertain any reasonable doubt that a very large portion of the corn land in this country would be thrown out of cultivation—an evil which, if it once commenced, no one could say where it would stop, or what would be its disastrous consequences." These were his (the Duke of Buckingham's) opinions—opinions to which he still adhered; and he believed that one of the most fatal consequences of these free-trade measures would be that of throwing out of cultivation a large portion of our corn land. If this country should then happen to be placed in a position of danger, and foreign ports were closed against us, our own cultivation having been considerably diminished, those who supported the present measure might have reason to regret the course they now pursued. But he would quote the language used in 1841 by a noble Duke (the Duke of Wellington), whose opinions would always be entitled to their Lordships' attention. That noble Duke said, "But, my Lords, I earnestly recommend you, for the sake of the people of this country—for the sake of the humblest orders of the people—not to lend yourselves to the destruction of our native cultivation." He agreed in this opinion; and he wished to God that now, in 1846, the noble Duke adhered to the opinions he had expressed in 1841. He (the Duke of Buckingham) regarded this measure with great alarm, for he believed it would be prejudicial to the interests of the population—manufacturing as well as agricultural; and that those who had established the Anti-Corn-Law League would be the first to suffer from its effects. He regretted that his noble Friends with whom he had acted for many years should so suddenly have changed their opinions on this question. Had they assigned any good reasons for that change, he might have admitted that it was justifiable; but, under the circumstances, he was bound as an honest man to say that he believed them to be wrong. He considered that they had not stated any reasonable grounds for having in the month of November last so suddenly changed their opinions, and abandoned all their former principles. He thought it would have been far better had they at once retired from office. He hoped and trusted, if Her Majesty's Ministers suc-

ceeded in carrying this measure—of which he was doubtful—that it would tend to benefit the country. But, holding the opinions he now did, which he had never altered, and which he saw no reason now to change, he entertained the strongest conviction that Her Majesty's Ministers would regret what they had done, and would live to see the destruction of the agricultural interest of the country. It was not too late even now to retrace their steps. He entertained the confident hope that their Lordships would still be able to stem the torrent, and prevent the Bill from passing into a law. He thought he might safely assert that no noble Lord was entirely satisfied with this Bill, and that no Bill ever came into their Lordships' House that was more generally disliked than the present. From party motives and party feelings it was to be carried, and it had originated in a desire to preserve political offices and honours. The Ministers had been put into their present places by them (the protectionists), but they did not act up to what they led them to believe were their opinions in 1841. He would now allude to a speech delivered by Sir R. Peel in 1842, who said then that it was desirable to secure the price of wheat at 54s. if possible. But under the present Bill he doubted whether it would be 44s. or even 40s. In 1842 the right hon. Gentleman said, that he did not rest the claims of the land to protection on the ground of its peculiar burdens alone, but on other grounds, the most important of which was that this country ought not to be dependent upon foreign nations for a supply of corn. The right hon. Baronet then recognised the claims of the land to protection, not only on the ground of the burdens it had to bear, but because it had enjoyed it for 150 years, and large capitals had been invested in it. Nothing in his (the Duke of Buckingham's) opinion, could be more unwise than to risk the disturbance of the interests embarked in agriculture by the sudden withdrawal of protection, under which the existing relations of society had in a great degree been framed, and in reliance on which so much wealth had been directed towards the cultivation of the soil. He (the Duke of Buckingham) could not stronger express his opinions. Before he sat down he had only one remark more to make. It had been repeatedly urged, that the feelings of the country were against this measure. If their Lordships entertained any doubts upon it, he conjured them

to present an humble Address to Her Majesty, praying Her to dissolve the present Parliament, and to allow the constituency of the country to be the best judges of whether they coincided with the measures of Her Majesty's Government or not.

LORD COLCHESTER was anxious to make some observations on what had fallen, in the course of these debates, from some noble Lords respecting the effects of free trade on our shipping and Colonies. He wished at the outset to guard himself against being thought an advocate of prohibition, or as being desirous of advancing the interest of any particular class of his fellow subjects to the injury of any other class. He believed the prosperity of our manufacturing interests to be essential to the welfare of the country, as well as that of the agriculturist, and that the one depended on the other; and it was because he considered that the principle of entire free trade—now asserted to be the only sound principle—to be injurious to both interests, that he felt obliged to oppose this Bill as one great advance in the new system. He was a friend to moderate protection, and as such, had supported the Corn Bill and Tariff of 1842; though now he doubted whether they had altogether answered the purpose intended. With regard to British shipping, the relaxation of the commercial code in 1826 had no doubt produced a considerable increase in its numbers. In 1831, the number of vessels belonging to the United Kingdom and its possessions in Europe, amounted to—

1831	19,450 ships	2,224,356 tons.
1841	23,461 ships	2,935,399 tons.

To the Colonies :

1831	4,792 ships	357,608 tons.
1841	6,591 ships	577,081 tons.

Showing during those ten years an annual average increase for the United Kingdom of 71,104 tons, and for the Colonial shipping of 21,947 tons. From 1842 (the date of the last alteration) the increase stood thus :

1842—All vessels belonging to British Empire,	
30,815 ships	3,619,850 tons.
1844 (the last year to which the official tables are brought down),	
31,320 ships	3,637,231 tons.

Giving an annual average increase of only 8,690 tons; and of this diminished increase, 7,202 tons belonged to Colonial shipping, leaving for vessels of the United Kingdom only 1,486 tons, instead of 71,104 tons.

The relaxation of duties had been particularly fatal to our whale fisheries.

In 1821 this trade employed	}	322 ships...12,788 men.
1841		85 ships... 3,008 men.

Being a decrease in 20 years of	}	237 ships... 9,780 men.

In that branch of the whale fishery carried on in the South Seas—

In 1821 there were at sea	123 ships.
1845	44 ships.

Fifteen of these would have returned in that year; and it was expected that of those not more than five would be refitted. Mr. McGregor, from whose Commercial Tariff of the United States these facts were taken, states that this decline of the British whale fishery "is asserted to be attributable to the withdrawal of bounties from British fisheries, and the abatement of duties on vegetable oils, the produce of foreign States." And Mr. Enderby, a great owner of whale ships, had lately told him (Lord Colchester) that unless our Government gave facilities for encouraging this trade, it would be entirely lost to this country; and the capital still employed in it would be transferred to other countries. The ships employed by the United States of North America in the whale fishery, had, under a protective system, increased from 431 in 1833, to 691 in 1845. With regard to the Colonies, the noble Lord the Under Secretary for the Colonies had that evening asked the question of what use were our Colonies to us; and in reply to his own question said, "To take off our surplus population." No doubt this was one use of Colonies; and our Colonies had between the years 1825 and 1844 taken off no less than 647,000 persons of that surplus. But there were other most important uses in our Colonies: to take our produce and manufactures, and to maintain our commercial navy. The declared value of British and Irish produce and manufactures exported from the United Kingdom to the Colonies in 1844, amounted to no less a sum than 16,045,761*l.*; exceeding by more than two millions sterling the exports to Russia, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Prussia, Germany, Holland, and Belgium—the whole exports to those countries, during the same year, amounting only to 13,937,037*l.* This was the trade which we were going to risk by the taking off the existing discriminating duties, and admitting into unfettered competition the rivals who at the present moment undersold us in neu-

tral markets. That such would be the risk was clearly established by the evidence of two gentlemen of great ability and experience in manufacturing concerns, lately given before the Committee of that House upon the burdens upon real property. These Gentlemen, Mr. H. Ashworth, and Mr. R. H. Greg, formerly Member for Manchester, both stated that the Americans undersold us in the markets of South America and of China; and Mr. Greg added, that in the coarser articles of the cotton manufacture, where the cost of the raw material bore a certain proportion to the whole expense of the manufactured article, the American States had advantages which would enable them to send such goods, not only into the markets of our Colonies, but to compete successfully with us in Manchester itself; and being asked whether he should be very much surprised if in the course of a few years the manufacturers of England should apply for protection, his reply was, "I should not be surprised at it;" but he added, "I should be very much surprised if they were attended to." But the case did not rest on the evidence of these gentlemen alone; he (Lord Colchester) could confirm it as to South America from his personal knowledge; and it was the state of British trade in those markets in 1831-32, which first made him doubt the policy of stimulating by legislative enactments the ardour of our manufacturers, who had already glutted the markets with goods sent out on speculation, and found themselves undersold by America. With respect to China, the notes of Sir Henry Pottinger, attached to the Tariff negotiated by him, showed that the Americans had already become formidable rivals to us in various branches of the cotton manufacture; that in some articles, the Chinese give a decided preference to French and Swiss goods; and that the broadcloths of Saxony and Belgium were sold there cheaper than the English. Free trade might, therefore, be found more beneficial to our commercial rivals than to ourselves, and enable them to compete with us in those markets now exclusively under our own control. If it should be asked why then did the millowners and manufacturers press for freedom of trade; it might be answered in the words of Mr. Ashworth, they cannot withdraw the capital embarked in mills: "they must either go on to prosperity and wealth, or go to the *Gazette*." They cannot even allow the mill to be idle, though it returns no profit; for

"it has been calculated by the Chamber of Commerce of Manchester, that the charges which must be paid, whether the mill is at work or not, amount, on a mill of 52,000 spindles to 6,334*l.*; therefore, unless the loss by working exceed that sum, it is better to go on." Goods were thus manufactured and exported, not because there was a demand for them, but in the hope of some chance of disposing of them to avoid the greater evil of the mill remaining idle. This was an unhealthy state of trade, which should not be encouraged. This statement of the probable effects of entire free trade was taking it under the most favourable point of view, as proceeding uninterruptedly; but if war should arise and interfere with our foreign trade, and at the same time the measure under discussion with respect to corn should have so injured the agriculturist as to have considerably diminished his demand upon the home market, what would then be the situation of the manufacturer? He (Lord Colchester) had been desirous of entering upon other points connected with this great question; but at that late hour he would not trespass further upon their time, than to add, that he thought so vast and hazardous an experiment should not be tried upon a great country, admitted to be prosperous, and still improving, under its existing system; and he must therefore vote for the Amendment of the noble Earl.

LORD HOWDEN would scarcely have ventured to present himself to their Lordships' notice, but he wished to call their attention to a few circumstances which he believed were not foreign to the subject of discussion. He would relieve their Lordships from any fear, and himself from the well-merited reproach of extreme arrogance, if he were to enter at length into a subject upon which neither his intelligence nor experience qualified him to detain their Lordships long. If he were disposed to introduce arguments worn threadbare by daily and nightly discussion, he might offer to their Lordships the apology that the first vote he had given in that House, six or seven years ago, was on a subject connected with the Corn Laws. It was, indeed, a mild and milk-and-water Motion; but those who voted with it were left in a small minority. But, milk-and-water as was its character, it was strenuously opposed by the noble Viscount then at the head of Her Majesty's Government, and by every Member of the Cabinet of that day, except one whom he did not

see in his place. This recollection, which might be fruitful in other hands, would not tempt him into any personalities. He said "tempt him;" for, from the experience of the last few weeks, or rather the last few months, one might suppose there was something very agreeable in saying very disagreeable things. The flashes of this sort of talent, with which they had of late been abundantly favoured, he should consider rather as showing him the ground on which he ought not to trench, than as holding out the light which was to guide him on his way. A considerable portion of his own early life had been spent in a country which would certainly have found more favour in the eyes of noble Lords on the cross benches, from its obstinate antipathy to any change in its commercial relations, and its undeviating concurrence in the wisdom of its ancestors. In 1819 or 1820, he forgot which, one of the southern provinces of Spain had, from local circumstances, completely lost its harvest, while in another it was rather more abundant than usual. If there had been enlightened regulations regarding commercial intercourse, the scantiness of one province would have been supplied by the overplus of another; but the legislative Acts which were in force prevented the interchange of commodities. The same circumstance had often subsequently been reproduced on a larger scale between different countries of Europe, as in 1810 between France and England. At that time the legislation of Spain not only established custom-houses between one country and another, but also custom-houses regulating the intercourse between different provinces, which prevented them from communicating their productions; and, incredible as it might appear, wheat was one of the prohibited articles. One of those provinces was blessed with abundance, while the other was visited with scarcity, almost amounting to famine. Putting aside humane considerations, how did the anti-commercial legislation result? The southern province had silk in large quantities, and a considerable portion of woollen manufactures; and a considerable portion would have been exported if the trade had been free. What answer could be made to this? He could not conceive that England, not growing corn sufficient for her own consumption, when at any time, or under any circumstances, she could export an increased supply of manufactured goods for an increased supply of foreign

corn, would be placed in disadvantageous circumstances. She would be placed precisely in the same position as the province of Spain from which he had borrowed the illustration. There could be no difference between two provinces, however small their mutual produce and consumption, and consequently their mutual interest, and any two countries forming an integral part of the great family of nations. He was tempted to state this, because he had heard the other night that the idea of a larger export of manufactures against an increased import of corn was a delusion, though he could not understand how it was possible to have an increased export without an increased import. They could not, with their increasing population, prevent a corresponding increase in their manufactures; and he maintained, therefore, that it was their duty, both in policy and justice, to feed their population as cheaply as they could. The exigency under which they were legislating was the force of circumstances; and it was because the Premier had seen and acknowledged that force that he had been covered with such a load of obloquy for yielding to what shortsighted persons chose to call expediency. It was his conviction that the Minister had not erred. There were two arguments against the measure which he would wish briefly to allude to. They were told that all authority was in favour of legislating upon protective principles. This he denied. The truth of the doctrine of free trade appeared to have been felt by Lord Bacon, although two centuries were necessary for its development. He would be allowed, as he had cited Lord Bacon, to allude to another authority—another great man, who, like Shakespeare, appeared to know something of every thing—Cervantes. Don Quixote, in giving instructions to Sancho Panza previous to his assuming the government of his famous island, counselled him as follows:—"Remember to take care to provide abundance of eatables and drinkables for your new subjects, for there is nothing that will sooner alienate their minds from their prince than a deficiency in either." They were told of the authority of old statutes in favour of protection, but it did not follow that what might be good in the fourteenth was equally advantageous in the nineteenth century. As for commercial intercourse rendering a country dependent upon another, the fact was, that the dependence was mutual—that the producers depended as much on the consumers, as the

consumers on the producers. He did not fear what foreign nations could do; but he feared that circumstances could arise in this country which would deprive the measure of much of its merit and all its grace. He would ask noble Lords about to oppose this measure what they expected would be the result of the present state of things? It might be that the Minister who had been courageous enough to sacrifice his place to principle, might cease to hold his office; but those noble Lords had no reasonable hopes of succeeding to his inheritance. They might render impossible the existence of a Government with which they had one feeling of dissent, and a thousand in common; but they were paving the way and macadamizing the road for a party with which they had not one sympathy, nor a single tie. He had no personal or hereditary reasons for attaching himself to either of the great parties; but not so with many of their Lordships, who had ancient descent, vast possessions, powerful influence; and these they were throwing in the scale to weigh down those who only were able to defend the principles they professed. He had heard something of treachery and ungracious words between the Minister and his adherents; but as a humble individual sincerely attached to the true Conservative policy, he only hoped their Lordships would not find they had been traitors to themselves. As to what was called, in modern phrasology, the pressure from without, the idea, in its inviolable sense—for he did not speak of the general feelings of the people legitimately expressed—ought to be scouted as operating upon their Lordships' judgment. But there were some things which were dangerous to speak of, some prophecies which tended to their own accomplishment. So long as their Lordships did their duty, he cared not what were the aspirations of the League. He rather feared the effect that might be produced by the apprehensions which had been indiscreetly expressed by some of their Lordships. He confided in the good sense of the country; but he asked those who were conjuring up distant visions of terror in theories not yet broached, and exigencies not yet developed, if they saw nothing to fear at an earlier period and more impending moment, in what might be the immediate disposition of expectant millions as to the upshot of a question no longer in speculation or in embryo, but which had expanded itself and passed triumphantly through one branch of the Legisla-

ture, and was now at their Lordships' threshold, awaiting whatever sentence they might be pleased to pronounce.

Debate adjourned.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Friday, June 12, 1846.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL—COMMITTEE. —SECOND NIGHT.

The Order of the Day for the Adjourned Debate on the Motion for going into Committee on the Corn Importation Bill having been read,

The MARQUESS OF EXETER said: My Lords, I rise to offer to your Lordships a few observations upon this important question, and to lay before your Lordships a few facts derived from private documents in regard to wages, which, I think, in addition to the able arguments brought forward by my noble Friends, ought to induce your Lordships either to reject this measure, or to render its provisions innocuous to the labouring classes. Before I proceed, however, I must express my regret at finding myself opposed to my Friend the noble Duke and his Colleagues; but, my Lords, we have each of us a duty to perform in this House to the Crown and to the country, which is paramount to every other consideration. I had hoped, before the second reading of this Bill, to have implored your Lordships not to abandon the opinions that you have so often expressed in favour of agricultural protection, and in regard to the necessity of protecting native industry, lest you should lose your high character as a legislative body, and show the country that you are but a passive instrument in the hands of a despotic Minister, who, having changed his own opinions, has sent this measure up from the other House of Parliament by the aid of persons to whom, up to the present time, he has been diametrically opposed in principle; having so contrived to break up parties, that neither his late friends nor his former opponents have found themselves in a position to form a Government; although I believe that both at the present moment are more numerous than his own supporters. This fact ought, I think, to have induced your Lordships to have stopped this Bill at once, that a precedent might not be set which hereafter, if followed by any ambi-

tious and designing Minister, might alike endanger the security of the Crown, as well as the independence of the country. Unfortunately, your Lordships have allowed this Bill to be read a second time; but how has it been carried? Not by any strong manifestation of feeling in this House or the country in its favour; not by any urgent arguments for its adoption; but by the sudden amalgamation of two parties of rival leaders who have been outbidding each other in liberality for the last fifteen years, aided by the deservedly invincible influence of the noble Duke who, having consented to remain a Member of the Government, has assisted in forcing this measure through the House. But what is the object of it? Why, under the plea of giving cheap food to the people, to subject the heavily taxed producers and labourers of this country to a competition with the untaxed labour of other nations; to lower the agricultural interest by the removal of protection; and to set up the manufacturing interest as the predominant and fructifying interest of all others. It is difficult to account for this sudden change in the opinions of the author of this measure, unless he has been enamoured by the great wealth which has poured out of the manufacturing districts for the purpose of railways, or has been fascinated by the enormous sums subscribed for interfering with the elective franchise, and has conceived that if he could only divert some of this wealth into his Exchequer, he would, for the future, be free from all anxiety about the revenue. But, my Lords, I believe that he will find himself mistaken. He may have power to set up his idol and bow down to it; he may encourage the manufacturers to increase their production, and for a time, perhaps, all may appear to be going on prosperously; but when his Exchequer shall become deficient from the falling-off of the resources of the agriculturists, he will call in vain for gold from the manufacturing districts; and instead of gold he will find himself surrounded with masses of unsaleable cotton goods, which will be offered to him at reduced prices. Now, my Lords, before I proceed to the question of wages, I will just advert to the state of the country when this measure was first proposed; and I find that, under the old system of protection, which the noble Lord behind me sneered at last night, the country was in a prosperous condition: the agriculturists were just recovering from the effects of the last alteration in the

Corn Laws; the labourers were receiving good wages, and in consequence of the demand of labour for railways were well employed; and the manufacturing districts were in a flourishing condition. There was nothing to be uneasy about at home, excepting a sudden disease amongst the potato crops, which threatened to occasion considerable distress in certain districts in Ireland, which it was quite right the Government should be prepared to alleviate, but which, in my opinion, was the very reason for not interfering with the Corn Laws, that the labourers in England, by a fall in prices might not also be reduced to a state of distress, by the want of employment. And what are the arguments by which it has been enforced? By exaggerated accounts of scarcity and famine, which have turned out fallacious, and which ought never to have been brought forward, when, through the bounty of Providence, there is grain enough in the country to feed the whole population, if they had but money to purchase it? And who are the persons by whom it has been brought forward? Why, Gentlemen who up to the present time have been warm advocates for protection; who have told you that protection was necessary, on account of the heavy burdens upon land, on account of the large sums invested in the cultivation of the soil, and on account of the great distress it would occasion, by the displacement of labour, if protection were to be withdrawn; but who now turn round upon us, and, adopting the language of the Anti-Corn-Law League, tell us that protection is no longer politic, and that a tax upon food is unjust! Now, my Lords, I shall endeavour to prove the converse of this proposition; and the fairest way of doing it, I consider, will be to compare the charges imposed upon the country in the year 1792, with those of the last year. I fix upon that period, as it is just before the commencement of the war of the French Revolution,

which was followed by the war with Napoleon, which wars, though successful, have been the occasion of all our burdens; and if I should prove to your Lordships that the interest and charge on the funded debt is about three times greater now than in 1792; that the income and expenditure of the country is, with the charge of collection, three times as large at the present moment; that the poor rates and county rates have nearly increased threefold within that period; and that the excess of the amount of those three charges is about 43,000,000*l.* beyond the amount of those heads in 1792, I think I shall have made out a strong case in favour of the necessity of continuing protection to those who pay the greatest share of those burdens. But if, in addition to this, I shall prove to you that, though the population has doubled within that period, the average price of wheat for the last three years, commencing with 1792, is very little below the average of the last three years; that the duty imposed upon foreign wheat, in 1792, when the average was under 50*s.*, was 24*s.* per quarter, whilst the duty now, at the same average, is only 20*s.*; and, above all, if I shall show you that the burdens which your necessities oblige you to impose upon the country, compel the farmers, and all those who employ labour, to pay double the wages they did at that period (1792), though the price of corn is about equal; so that, supposing a farmer paid 400*l.* a year for labour in 1792, he now has to pay 800*l.* for the same number of persons; and that the wages of masons, carpenters, and all who are employed in labour, are also doubled—I think I shall have made out a case to show, not only that a tax upon foreign corn is just, but that it will be a gross act of injustice to pass this Bill, and to remove protection from agriculture, unless you first remove those burdens which press upon the industry of the country.

1792.				
Interest and Charge of National Debt.				
March 25	...	...	...	£9,420,888

1840.				
Interest and Charge of National Debt.				
To April 5	...	...	...	£27,788,836

1792.				
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE.				
Income	...	...	...	£19,258,814
Expenditure	...	...	...	17,437,441

1846.				
Income	...	...	...	£52,000,324
Expenditure	...	...	...	49,400,167

1785.
(No account of 1792.)
£2,167,750

POOR RATE.

1845.				
Gross receipt	...	...	...	£7,000,511

HIGHWAY RATE.

1792	...	...	...	...	£218,185	1830	...	...	...	...	£1,169,891
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ACCOUNT OF THE SEVERAL HEADS TOGETHER.

Income.

1792.		1846.	
Income	£19,258,814	Income	£52,009,324
Poor rate of 1785	2,167,750	Poor rate	7,009,511
Highway rate	218,185	Highway rate	1,169,891
Repayments, allowances, and drawbacks, say	1,300,000	Repayments, allowances, drawbacks, and other payments, as in 1842	4,626,126
	£22,944,749		£64,814,852
		Deduct Income of 1792	22,944,749
			£41,870,103

Expenditure.

1792.		1846.	
Expenditure	£17,437,441	Expenditure	£49,400,167
Poor rate, 1785	2,167,750	Poor rate	7,009,511
Highway rate	218,185	Highway Rate	1,169,891
Repayments, Drawbacks, &c.	1,300,000	Repayments, Drawbacks, &c.	4,026,126
	£21,123,376		£62,205,695
		Deduct Expenditure, 1792	21,123,376
			£41,082,319

Excess of Income, Poor Rate, and Highway Rate in 1846, over the like charges in 1792	£41,870,103
Excess of Expenditure, with like charges, in 1840, over 1792	41,082,319

POPULATION.

1792.	1841.	1846.	
9,200,000	18,664,761	20,000,000 (without Ireland).	
Average Price of Wheat at Stamford in Years		Average Price of Wheat at Stamford in Years	
1792	42s. 4d.	1843	49s. 6d.
1793	43 0½	1844	50 5½
1794	51 1½	1845	49 9½
Average of Three Years, 47s. 4½d. per quarter.		Average of Three Years, 49s. 1d. per quarter.	
General Average from 1790 to 1799, 55s. 11d.		Average of Tithe Commutation from 1837 to 1846, 56s. 0½d.	

Average of last Three Years, 50s. 0d.

Duty on Wheat in 1792, under 51s., 24s. 0d.	Duty on Wheat in 1846, under 50s., 20s. 0d.
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1792.	1846.
Average price of labour, for garden, park, and farm labourers, 6s. per week.	Average price of wages for garden, park, farm, &c. 12s. per week.
12s. per week having been the ruling wages since 1815, with very few exceptions.	

It is evident from this statement, which I hope I have rendered intelligible, that the amount of wages depends more upon the burdens which press upon labour than upon the price of corn; for unless the labourer can obtain as much for his labour as will defray the expense of the taxed articles which he consumes, as well as to supply the other wants of his family, he is no longer in an independent condition, but is upon the verge of pauperism. Now, if this measure should pass, and the price of wheat and other grain should fall as much as we apprehend, how can the farmer pay the amount of wages to the labourer which the burden of taxation renders necessary? The thing will be impossible, and the result will be that the farmer, being in distress, will not be able to employ the la-

bourer; and the independent and now happy labourer will become a broken-hearted pauper. It is unjust, therefore, to deprive the farmer and labourer of protection, unless you first diminish the burdens which press upon their industry. Either you should reduce the national debt in the same proportion which the repeal of the Corn Laws will diminish their incomes, or you should retain the Corn Laws to keep up their capital, so as to make the pressure of taxation less onerous. But this measure does neither, but will reduce the capital of the landed interest one-third, and thereby will augment the pressure of taxation upon the whole community. It may have the effect of lowering wages a little, which is the sole object of the League; but I deny that it will assist

the manufacturer, for what he may gain in a foreign market he will sacrifice doubly in the home and colonial markets. The malt tax, the spirit duties, the duties on tea, sugar, tobacco, and hops, are the taxes which press the most upon labour; but until you can reduce those and the national debt, which you cannot do till 1860, you have no right to take away protection from native industry. I cannot help expressing my great regret that many of the right rev. Prelates, for whom I have the highest respect, should have thought it their duty to vote for the second reading of this Bill. I had expected, as they are the only representatives of the Clergy, whose interests will suffer so extremely from this measure, that they would have opposed it as a measure most hurtful to the interests of the Church. My surprise is, that many of those who have been asserting the necessity of augmenting poorer livings, and using their best exertions to carry out the object of the present Commission, should have voted for a measure that must indisputably affect the incomes of the poorer Clergy, and stultify—such would be the effect—all they have been doing to augment them during the last few years. I can assure the right rev. Bench that their Clergy will feel their desertion most acutely. I had some conversation with several, in which I told them that I had heard reports that the Bishops intended to support the measure; but one and all declared they did not think the right rev. Bench would so betray their trust. Even now the incomes of many of the Clergy are so limited, that they cannot assist their parishioners as much as they desire to do; and if this Bill should unhappily pass, the calls upon them will be more numerous, and they will be less able to relieve them from their diminished resources. However, as your Lordships have, however unfortunately, allowed this Bill to pass the second reading, it remains for me to implore your Lordships so to reconsider this question and so alter this Bill when it shall get into the Committee, as may render it as little hurtful as possible to the country, if it shall not ultimately be rejected by your Lordships. In order to do so, I will just advert to the period when this measure was first suggested—one of the most extraordinary features of which is, that it was proposed at a time when the country was in a state of great prosperity. I think I have now shown your Lordships that we have been living under a Constitution based

upon agriculture, of which protection has hitherto been considered the vital principle. Under it our manufactures have flourished and increased beyond all expectation; and although our expenses have been enormous, we have been enabled to sustain public credit and to raise sufficient grain to feed our increasing population at as low a price as before the burdens upon which I have alluded were imposed upon the country. I think I may assert, therefore, that it has been based upon a proper foundation, for it has proved itself to be founded upon a rock. But this Bill proposes to us a new Constitution, of which the manufacturing interest is to be the foundation, and free trade its vital principle. It is to be supported by a theoretical increased supply and demand from foreign nations, aided by impoverished home and colonial demands. It may flourish in times of peace; but if war shall occur, being dependent upon foreign nations for the supply of food, it will be annihilated like a house built upon the seashore, for it will have no real foundation and no resources to sustain it. I trust, therefore, your Lordships will reject this Bill.

EARL DELAWARE assured their Lordships that he rose to address the House only from a pressing sense of public duty. From the first moment this measure was announced to the public, at the commencement of the present year, he, as an humble individual, yet as one who would be called upon to say aye or nay to this measure in his place in Parliament, foresaw that he would be placed in painful and difficult circumstances. He felt that on the one hand he should have to struggle with strong party and political attachments; and, on the other, with the stern requirements of public duty. He felt that on a question of this magnitude and importance—a question involving, he might say, fearful changes—changes, at least, in his mind, of fearful import to the best interests of the country—it was the duty of every man, and that every man was solemnly and seriously called upon to consult his own conscience before he determined upon the line of conduct he should pursue. He had struggled hard with his own humble opinions to see if he could bring them into harmony with those of the authors of the measure, hoping to avoid that which he conceived to be almost an unmitigated evil, namely, a separation from the political friends with whom he had acted since he

had had the honour of a seat in that House. His course of conduct, also, involved the public situation which he had held; and great as was the honour of that station, he felt it was of very inferior value when compared to the marks of condescension which he had received from the highest quarters, and which he would not dare to allude to further than to express his deep and lasting gratitude. But, notwithstanding the consideration to which he had referred, he had been compelled to come to the conclusion that as an honest man he could not give his support to this measure. At that period of this protracted debate, it would ill become him to enter into detail, with a view to explain the process of thinking that had brought him to the conclusion at which he had arrived. It was sufficient to say, that he had given to the measure all the attention he could command—he had examined the arguments adduced by the supporters of this measure, and they had all failed to convince him that there was anything in the exigencies of the present time to call for it. No irresistible circumstances had suddenly come across them which rendered it necessary to change the current of their legislation. They were now told that it had been long running in the same course; but no necessity had arisen to induce them to raise up the remaining floodgates which had hitherto served to stem its too great impetuosity. He trusted it was unnecessary for him to say that he did not mean to cast anything like reproach on his right hon. Friend the right hon. Baronet in another place, or on the noble Duke (the Duke of Wellington), or on his noble Friends on the bench below him, in consequence of the course they had adopted. He was sure the right hon. Gentleman and those noble Lords had on this occasion been—as they always had been—actuated by an overpowering motive in doing that which they thought to be best for the interests of the country. He thought the course they had taken was a mistaken one; but he was convinced that they had adopted it and carried it out, so far as it had been carried out, with that sincerity and singleness of purpose which he trusted they would give him credit for in the opposition which it was his misfortune to be compelled to give them on this measure. It had been said, what was the use of resisting this measure?—what could they hope to obtain by it? It was said that public opinion was in its favour; and, if it were not carried this year, it would be carried

two or three years hence. Now, he begged leave, with all humility, to deny that assertion. He denied that public opinion was in favour of this measure. It was well known that a very large portion of those noble Lords in that House, and of hon. Gentlemen in the other House, who supported this measure, felt themselves very much dislike for it in its present shape. They had proof that a large number of their Lordships, and of the Members of the other House, disliked this measure altogether; and was it not fair to think that the same thing was going on out of doors? It was not fair, therefore, to say that public opinion was in favour of the measure. He doubted it very much; there was no proof of it; and he doubted very much if the opinions of the reflecting and well-disposed part of the public would be in favour of any change in the present circumstances of the country. They were told to consider the influence which the possible rejection of this measure might have on political parties in this country. That question was ably and eloquently put on the preceding night by a noble Baron who was not then in his place; and it was one of the unfortunate circumstances of the case that this question was presented to them. If they now did their duty, it struck him that they had only one course to pursue, and that was, to look at this measure plainly and simply as it was put to them. Let them deal with it openly, honestly, fairly, and without partiality. They might yet be able to cope with the difficulties by which he was willing to admit they were surrounded, and with the assistance of Divine Providence they would be successful. He had endeavoured to discharge the painful duty which he thought incumbent on him; for he thought that to have shrunk from doing so would have been to make shipwreck of his own conscience.

The BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S said, that, anxious as he had been to say a few words before the debate came to a close, he assured their Lordships it was not because it ever was his intention to trouble their Lordships with any discussion of the general merits of the important question under their deliberation, or for the purpose of stating at large the grounds of his opinion on that question. He was quite aware that this subject was so alien to his ordinary studies and pursuits, that it was one on which he could have no claim whatever to their Lordships' attention. He

was conscious that he possessed no authority whatever on it that could give the slightest weight to his opinion. He was also conscious that he was not able to adduce any facts or arguments upon it with which their Lordships were not familiar even to weariness and satiety. It was a different motive, and one of a very special, and, he thought, of a very reasonable kind, that had induced him to depart from his original intention, and break that silence which he had intended to preserve, and to solicit their Lordships' attention. It was a motive which compelled him, in a measure, to speak in his own defence; for their Lordships could not have forgotten, that, in the course of the recent discussion, very numerous appeals—most pointed, emphatic, solemn, and earnest appeals—were made by a great number of noble Lords—and he (the Bishop of St. David's) must be permitted to say, he thought in a very unusual strain—to those who occupied a place in that part of their Lordships' House. Their Lordships must be aware, as he was sure was every one of those to whom those appeals were addressed, that they were of such a nature as to involve very serious charges against that part of the Members of their Lordships' House in that place who held the opinions which he held, and had given a vote conformable to that which he had given on this question; charges amounting to nothing less than that of neglect of a duty which undoubtedly they ought to hold most sacred—an indifference to interests which ought to be most dear to them. Under these circumstances he was sure their Lordships would think that it was perfectly natural and proper that one of those to whom those appeals had been applied, should solicit their Lordships' attention for a short time, in order to meet those appeals, and vindicate himself and others from the imputations which were cast upon them. At the same time, he wished it to be understood, that, in the few remarks he was about to make on this point, he was speaking simply in his own name. He had not the presumption to stand forward in that place as the representative of others, many of whom he saw near him, and who would be better able to discharge the duty than himself, and to whose more able hands, if he had observed in them any inclination to answer those appeals, he should have most gladly resigned this duty. But nevertheless he did venture to hope that, in the statement he was about to make on

the subject, he would enjoy their unanimous concurrence, however they might differ from him on the general merits of the question before them. There was one thing in those appeals to the Episcopal Bench which he must acknowledge afforded him some satisfaction, and that was the circumstance that those appeals exclusively came from one quarter and from one party in their Lordships' House—they came exclusively from those noble Lords who were adverse to this measure now before them. That was a circumstance which afforded him an agreeable surprise, for the case might have been far otherwise; and, considering the arguments which their Lordships were all aware had been used on this subject in other assemblies, and addressed to excite the popular mind on this subject, he should not have been surprised if some appeals founded upon those arguments and topics had been addressed to the Members of that Bench in a different sense and for an opposite purpose. And he could not but express his surprise that those noble Lords who had indulged in these appeals did not consider, before they made them, that they were using weapons which might be employed as effectually by their opponents, and turned against themselves. He should not have been surprised if that Bench had been appealed to on principles of not merely public policy, but on principles of humanity, nay, of religion itself, and even texts of scripture brought against them to prove that it was their bounden duty not to lend their countenance to any law which had for its object to thwart the benevolent designs of Providence, by restricting the supply of food to the population of this country. That would be an appeal which they might find it difficult to answer. He could not say that they should attach any importance to such an argument, for he considered such an argument would be a gross fallacy; he admitted, however, the moderation exhibited by the noble Lords who were favourable to this measure, in refraining from such popular and specious topics. He held them to be fallacies, because it was quite clear that they took for granted the question at issue; that they supposed, not only that one view of the subject was the only right one, but that it was known and felt to be so by those who opposed it. There was another circumstance connected with the appeals to which he had referred that was deserving of attention: he really looked upon them as a very curious and remarkable feature in this

debate. It appeared to him that in making these appeals the noble Lords who made them were acting a little inconsistently with their own professed principles. He would call their Lordships' recollection to the nature and circumstances of those appeals. They were called upon to recollect that they (the Bishops) were the natural representatives and guardians of the rights and interests of the Clergy; and on that ground it was urged upon them that it was their duty to give their vote against a measure which threatened to be injurious to their interests. But what was the language and what were the professions of the same noble Lords in other parts of their speeches and addresses to the House on this question? Did they not remember that every one of them in succession had most emphatically and indignantly repudiated the idea of treating this question as a landlords' question, or as a question at all affecting the peculiar interests of a class? Those noble Lords all stood forward as the advocates of the interests of the great masses of the community—as the friends of the labouring man; they cast away all considerations of private interest—all considerations affecting their own class and their own order in society. Why, then, how came it that it had escaped the observation of those noble Lords, that with regard to the Clergy they stood precisely in the same position. Their interests either coincided with those of the great mass of the community, or were distinct and separate from them. There was only one of those two cases that could be supposed; and for argument sake he was quite willing the noble Lords should choose whichever they liked. Let him suppose that the interests of the Clergy were identical with those of the great mass of the community. Then what occasion was there for bringing them into this discussion, or to appeal to them (the Bishops) as the representatives of their particular interests? It was clear that such an appeal was at all events superfluous; and when their Lordships considered the line of argument taken by those noble Lords, and what pictures they had drawn of the consequences to result from this measure—when they represented it as pregnant with danger to the institutions of the country, as well as the interest and welfare of the labouring population, did it not border upon the ridiculous that they should place in juxtaposition anything so diminutive and insignificant as the effect this measure was to have on the interests

of the Clergy? Were they to be told that they were bound to resist this measure, because it would lead to the overthrow of the Constitution and the ruin of the Empire, and also because it would produce a considerable reduction in tithes? They must recollect the vehement language in which they were addressed by one of those noble Lords, who held out some vague indefinite threat of the consequences that were to fall on the Members of that Bench if, as he said, they deserted, not the interests of the people or of the labouring population, not even the interests which might be expected to be so dear and sacred to them, considering the character in which they sat there; but, said the noble Lord, “if you desert us;”—if they did he did not know what retribution was to follow, and he did not care, but he wished to call their attention to what was probably passing in the noble Lord's mind. The noble Lord felt that whatever might be the consequences of it, it was not a question for the labouring class, or for the tenant-farmer, but that it was a landlords' question; and if it had been otherwise he was sure the noble Lord would never have addressed such an appeal to the Members of that Bench. There was another circumstance which struck him as being still more remarkable about these appeals, and that was, that noble Lords should express such sympathy for the interests of the Clergy. It appeared that they understood their wishes and feelings better than the Clergy did themselves; for not only had the Clergy as a body publicly expressed no feeling on the subject, not only had they abstained from approaching their Lordships' House by way of petition, but they had never professed to his knowledge an opinion in private on the subject, or given to the members of the Episcopal Bench even a hint as to the course of conduct they had desired them to pursue. And he considered that the Clergy by so doing had acted most wisely, and had earned the approbation and respect of all classes. What, he asked, was the tendency of the appeals which had been made to them by those noble Lords, except that they should by their voluntary officious interference place the Clergy in that very invidious position which they had voluntarily declined to stand in? He would like to know what any of those noble Lords conceived would have been the effect on the public mind, even if there had been a perfect unanimity on this subject, in every sense, amongst the members of that Bench

—would there have been a second opinion in the mind of any man in the country that that part of their Lordships' House had been swayed not by their dispassionate and deliberate opinion, but by a sense of the interests of their peculiar class? He rejoiced that it was otherwise, proving that the Bishops, as a body, had followed their own convictions; and he might appeal, as a further confirmation, to the fact, that two of that body, united not only by their office but by ties of blood, took opposite sides on this question. A noble Duke who had spoken on the preceding night (the Duke of Buckingham) had stated, as the result of his calculation, the effect which would be produced on the interests of the Clergy if this measure passed into law. The noble Duke had calculated the matter so exactly, that he had found out that it would produce a diminution of their income amounting to one-fourth. He (the Bishop of St. David's) did not pretend to be able to follow that noble Duke in those calculations, or say whether there was any good foundation for them or not; but he must say the noble Duke had overlooked and taken out of the account everything in the shape of the compensation which the Clergy might receive to make up for this deficiency, in consequence of the effects which its advocates expected from this measure. That could not be fairly or reasonably left out of the account; and, moreover, he must be permitted to say, that whatever might be the consequences arising to the interests of the Clergy from this measure, he thought the bad effects could not be laid on this measure, but on one that had passed long before; for it was taking this measure in connexion with that for the commutation of tithes, that the interests of the Clergy were placed on a different footing from those of the other classes who were interested in land. But, if so, although it was possible that the Clergy might sustain loss, they could not say they suffered any injury; for that measure was undoubtedly passed with the concurrence of those who represented their interests in that House, and with full warning of the possibility, if not probability, that it would be followed by the proposal now under consideration. Some of those who took part in the discussion of that measure, did distinctly advert to the possibility that at no distant period the repeal of the Corn Law would take place. He only alluded to that circumstance for one purpose, which was to show the uncertainty of all calculation

of that nature; for those who adverted to that possibility did so, not because they conceived in case of the repeal of the Corn Laws the interests of the Clergy would be affected, but that that repeal would operate as a grievance and hardship to the owners of land. [The Duke of Richmond: Oh, oh!] He did not know what the noble Duke meant by that intimation; but, on reference to the best accounts that could be found of the proceedings of Parliament during that discussion, he found the circumstance had occurred to which he adverted. He felt that the vote they should give on this question should not be in the slightest degree affected by its operation on the interests of the Clergy. If he met a body of his Clergy, after the close of this discussion, and said to them, "I think I merit your approbation, for though, according to my own convictions, I thought the measure was likely to tend to the general interests of the community, still, as I thought it would operate injuriously to yours, I complied with the earnest exhortation I received from many of your best friends in the House of Lords by giving my vote against it"—he (the Bishop of St. David's) was sure, that if he were capable of such dishonesty, so far from earning the good will, and thanks, and support of the Clergy, he would be undeserving of the good opinion of any man in the country. He could not consent to place such a momentous question as this upon any such narrow, paltry, and miserable ground, as its effect upon any particular class, however closely he was connected with it. There was only one way in which he could consent to look upon it, and that was the effect it was likely to have on the comfort, and well-being, and prosperity of the great mass of the community. Looking at it in that point of view, he asked those noble Lords whether or not it was their intention to represent that the state of the gross mass of the labouring population of the country was on the whole so satisfactory, that it did not stand in need of any change? He thought expressions had been used which seemed to his ear very strongly to put forward such a notion; and yet when he reflected upon all he saw, it appeared to him so monstrous a paradox that he scrupled to attribute it to the good sense or good feeling of any of their Lordships. There could be no doubt that, if this measure was, as it had been described, a great and fearful experiment, at all events it was not a gratuitous and wanton one. Gratuit-

tous and unnecessary it might be with reference to the ease of those noble Lords, and the class immediately below them, the occupiers of their land, who might have no desire for any uncertain or perilous change; but with regard to the interests those noble Lords most particularly professed to advocate, he must contend that this was far from a gratuitous experiment; that it was one forced upon Parliament by the emergencies and necessities of the case; and that the question was one of life or death to the people of this country. To his own mind it was the great recommendation of the measure, that at all events it held out that which was the sweetener of all human adversity and misery—hope—the hope of an improvement in the condition of the people. If their Lordships rejected this experiment, and declared their determination to abide by the system advocated by the noble Lords to whom he had referred, what had they to hold out in exchange? What prospect of improvement did they present? None. It was a natural and inevitable consequence of their principles, that they should more or less directly, openly or covertly, deny the existence of the need of such improvement. They had been reminded occasionally in the course of this discussion of the consequences likely to ensue from the rejection of this measure; and they had been reminded of what he believed was an unquestionable fact, that such a step on their part would be likely to produce a very great degree of disappointment, and discontent, and irritation in the country. That was a topic he should be most unwilling to touch for the purpose of, in the slightest degree, influencing their Lordships; but he thought there was one thing which deserved their Lordships' most serious attention in the matter, namely, the reason why the rejection of this measure was likely to produce discontent and irritation. Was it not simply this, that the country at large and the labouring population felt that if their Lordships rejected this measure, they were excluding them from the only hope they had at present to look to for a favourable change in their position? That was a consideration which he felt to be worthy of the attention of their Lordships' House, and they should most seriously and carefully dwell on it before they made up their minds to take a step that would produce such a feeling in the public mind. He did not mean to say that although he looked to this measure with hopeful expectation, he expected very

great advantage from it. He repeated, his expectations of benefit from this measure were by no means sanguine; and if the Government had represented it in the light in which it had been placed by many popular declaimers on the subject, who described it as the beginning of a new epoch of unbounded prosperity in the country, he would have viewed the measure with the greatest distrust; but his feeling of confidence in the measure of the Government was very much strengthened by the sobriety and the caution of the language they had used in expressing the expectations they felt on the subject. They contented themselves with saying that the effect of this measure would be to produce an increased steadiness in the market—a constant and more regular employment of the labouring man—that it would give an active stimulus to trade, and also a considerable and healthy stimulus to agriculture itself. But with all that, he was quite sure it would be unreasonable to expect that they could at the same time promote the great interests of the manufacturing classes of this country, and also any very considerable advantage or addition to the comforts and enjoyments of the labouring man. But still, although he did not anticipate to a great extent such results, yet however small they might be, however small might be the addition made to the means of subsistence enjoyed by the labouring man, still it became a matter of very grave importance when they considered the vast surface over which that benefit was spread, and the immense number who would participate in it. He was not sure that all their Lordships were fully aware of the importance of the addition that was made to the comfort and happiness of the labouring population by a very minute addition to their means. And here he would be allowed to advert to a little circumstance connected with this part of the subject, and illustrative of the habits and feelings of the poorer classes. He was sure that he would be borne out by the experience of any person who had anything to do with the education of the poor, when he said that no cause was more frequently assigned by them as a reason for their being unable to take advantage of the means of education and instruction offered to them, than the misery of their physical condition. Often, in localities where there were excellent Sunday schools and places of worship, they found a poor family, a swarm of ragged children playing about in the streets all Sunday;

and if the question was put, why this was so, the answer of the parents almost invariably was, that they could not send their children to church or school because they had not decent clothing to appear in. If these poor people had but a little surplus, however small, of the share which they received of the produce of the soil which they cultivated, to send to the manufacturer and exchange for decent articles of clothing, such an addition to their means would confer an inestimable blessing, as it would afford them means of educating their children, and improving their moral and religious condition. There was another point of view in which he must be allowed to consider the subject. He had heard noble Lords speak of this measure as a wanton and gratuitous experiment, because it was not positively certain what amount of benefit was to be derived from it. Though that might be a fair consideration for those who had to bear the whole responsibility of introducing it, it was no argument against the measure which ought to operate on their Lordships' minds; because, even if no benefit whatever of the kind he had adverted to, should result from this measure—if he was sure that it would leave the country precisely where he found it, still he would contend that, by rejecting the Bill, their Lordships would be incurring imminent danger, and would be altering their own position in the country in the most hazardous degree. It would still be no contemptible gain for their Lordships to release themselves from the obloquy and suspicion of having rejected such a measure, and refused to make such an experiment from selfish and interested motives. No doubt their Lordships might be fully conscious of the purity of their own intentions; but they must recollect that a very different view of this great question would be entertained throughout the country, and that their conduct would be liable to a very different construction out of doors. He could not help, therefore, reminding the noble Earl who spoke last night, and adverted to what he deemed the extraordinary fact of a measure of this importance being passed through their Lordships' House on the first occasion on which it was brought before it, and reminded their Lordships how differently they had dealt with another great question, on which they had at first disagreed with the other House of Parliament, but at length acceded to its views—he alluded to the Catholic Relief Bill—he could not help reminding the

noble Earl that there was a very wide difference between the two cases, which the noble Earl appeared to have overlooked. In the question of the Roman Catholic Relief Bill, it was possible that their Lordships might have been charged with shortsighted prejudice in rejecting it; but there was not, there could not, have been any suspicion that their Lordships were actuated by personal interest. Could there be a more glaring contrast than that which existed in this respect between the two cases which had thus been brought into comparison by the noble Earl? Now, although he did not entertain any exaggerated expectation of the benefits to be derived from the operation of this measure—although he had endeavoured to modify and limit those expectations where they were entertained; yet he did entertain a very strong and active belief that at all events the expectations which had been held out on the other side, the evil consequences which had been predicted, had been enormously exaggerated. He expected no consequences from the measure of a sinister character; but, at any rate, those who had threatened them with disastrous results had entirely overlooked all the compensation which might be made, and which, indeed, would spring from the very nature of the measure, for any incidental evils which might accompany it. Those persons had taken it for granted that the Legislature, if it passed this measure, would be divesting itself of the power of which it was possessed of interposing for the purpose of redressing, and reforming, and correcting any injustice or inconvenience which experience might show had resulted from this measure. It was quite certain that Parliament did not abdicate such a power: it did not preclude itself from receiving the lessons of experience, and adopting such legislative amendments as it might find necessary at future periods to pass. For himself, he placed unbounded confidence in the wisdom of Parliament; and he believed that if the result of this measure should prove unfair or injurious to any particular class of men, it would be found not beyond the reach of the wisdom and justice of the Legislature to provide a fitting remedy. Therefore it was that he did feel on every ground that in the vote which he had given, and in that which he was about to give, he was not betraying any of those interests which ought to be dear to him; while at the same time he had consulted, to the best of his poor ability, the highest interests of the

great mass of the community. At all events it was a great consolation to him to reflect that in the vote which he had given, he found himself coinciding with the result of the most anxious and careful studies which had been bestowed upon the subject by men who had devoted the labour of their lives to it; it was a consolation that he found himself coinciding with the great majority of all the parties between which the Legislature had hitherto been divided. He could not believe that in sharing their opinions, he had fallen into any very great, very serious, or, at all events, very fatal error. Sure he was, too, that he should enjoy this consolation, that whatever might be the result of this measure to those interests which considered themselves attacked by it—and particularly to that interest the representatives of which he was addressing—still they would by passing this Bill, retain something more valuable still than that which they conceived endangered—namely, increased respect, good will, and kindness from the great majority of the people.

THE BISHOP OF EXETER said, he had not the least intention of addressing their Lordships that evening, nor would he have done so now, had it not been for the almost individual appeal which had been made to him by the right rev. Prelate who had just sat down. That right rev. Prelate had called upon those Bishops who differed from the vote which he was about to give, as well as those Bishops who voted along with him, to agree with him in a portion of the speech which he had just delivered to their Lordships. In that speech he (the Bishop of Exeter) had heard something in which he could cordially concur, and he had also heard many things from which he was bound to say he decidedly dissented. He agreed with the right rev. Prelate cordially in all the praise he had given to the Clergy for the way in which they had acted in the contemplation of those great sacrifices which were, in all probability, about to be inflicted upon them. But he could not agree with the right rev. Prelate that it would be right in them to be regardless of the interests of that class of the community. He was sure the right rev. Prelate did not mean to say that they ought to be regardless of their interests; he certainly used phrases which were a little too strong; but he (the Bishop of Exeter) was confident they did not do justice to his own feelings. The right rev. Prelate said, that he would not put into competition with the great interests of the

country, the smaller, and insignificant, and miserable interests of that class to which he had alluded. [*The Bishop of St. David's rose to explain.*] The right rev. Prelate would have an opportunity of offering an explanation afterwards; but if he would permit him to go on, he thought his right rev. Friend would feel the truth of what he was about to say. He was about to state, that his right rev. Friend had used certain words which he knew were not intended by his right rev. Friend to convey their full meaning, which, however, they would convey to the ears of all that heard them. He thought his right rev. Friend mistook the nature of the argument which noble Lords had addressed to the Episcopal Bench, when they called upon them to interpose on behalf of the interests of the Clergy of this country. It was not because the pecuniary interests of 10,000 or 12,000 individuals would be deranged—though those persons were, from their position, of deep importance to the community—by the passing of this measure, that noble Lords addressed them; but because the best interests of the poor were at stake on the matter—the interests of religion and morality—and because the interests of the poor and of the rich alike would suffer, if their position, their independent position, as far as that consisted in the temporalities of the Church, was in any degree shaken. It was upon that ground, he understood, that noble Lords had so frequently appealed to that Bench, calling upon them to interpose. He thanked them for those appeals. He did not agree with his right rev. Friend in thinking that it was unfit for their Lordships to call upon that Bench to interpose in behalf of those interests which they were specially bound to protect from invasion, whenever they were threatened by any measure proposed in that House. He rejoiced that it was the practice of their Lordships to call upon that Bench to defend those interests. They were in the habit constantly and continually—he spoke now from the experience of many years—they were in the habit of constantly appealing to that Bench to interpose for the protection of higher interests than those of individuals—the sacred interests of morality and religion. He thanked noble Lords, therefore, who were in the habit of making those appeals to them upon the special interests which they sat there to defend; and he would repeat that nothing was more common. He was sure that if it was an offence, it was an offence of which he had himself

been guilty more than once, for he had frequently taken occasion to call upon the noble and learned Lords in that House, in cases where the laws and Constitution of the country were endangered—he had taken the liberty, and he was sure that in so doing he acted in the spirit of the Constitution, of calling upon them to protect the laws and Constitution of the country; and if he had the right to address noble and learned Lords upon those points, he thought that all noble Lords had the same right to address the Bishops who sat in that House, in defence of those claims which they (the Bishops) were specially bound to protect. He had done with that part of the subject. He certainly agreed with his right rev. Friend in this, that he for one was not disposed to rest upon the way in which this Bill would affect the interests of the Clergy—he would not rest upon that as his main argument in this case; but they would permit him to say, that he considered it, though a subsidiary argument, as one of no mean moment, in judging of this measure. He, like his right rev. Friend, would not for a moment put any temporal interest in competition with the great question of plenty, or cheapness of provisions in the land. If mere cheapness of provisions was the only question now before their Lordships' House, it was one which in all probability would admit of a tolerably easy solution. But the question which he had to ask—he was not capable of dealing with it as a political economist, for of political economy he was altogether ignorant; but dealing with the question as a man of plain understanding and of ordinary observation, he would ask, would cheapness of provisions be a great good to the mass of the people in this country? If he thought so, he should have voted very differently from what he did on the last occasion; for he considered it to be the duty of their Lordships to view the question of cheap bread as it concerned the interest of the great masses of the people, and not as it affected special classes. He had, therefore, heartily joined in resisting this measure which was before their Lordships; and he had done so the more especially for the sake of the people. He was not to be repelled by the jests almost which had been thrown out, of supposing that none could be truly the labourers' friends except those who supported this measure, and that it was pure hypocrisy to talk otherwise; he would not be deterred by that from avowing frankly his

chief reason for resisting this Bill. It was that he did not consider the interests of the labouring poor would be promoted by cheap provisions so much as by good wages. That applied to all classes of the labouring poor. His own personal experience and observation, indeed, were almost entirely limited to agriculture. He saw the agricultural labourer now suffering under a great deficiency of wages through a large portion of the county with which he was connected. Then, he asked the House, what would be the best way to increase this rate of wages, and to improve the condition of the agricultural labourer? Would it be by letting into the market of this country the labour of foreign countries? Could they be gravely told, that the true way to raise the wages of the labourers of England would be to bring them into competition with the serfs of Poland? In his opinion, that was not the right course; his opinion certainly was, that the more they introduced foreign labour, the more they interfered with the wages of the domestic labourer. That, he said, was the main reason why he opposed this measure. Agreeing, as he did, most heartily with his right rev. Friend, in not expecting any great advantage from this measure, even if it attained the utmost success that could be imagined; and believing that it was fraught with bitter disappointment, he could not give an opinion with those who pressed it upon their Lordships to adopt this measure. Even if he thought with his right rev. Friend that there was a chance of some benefit being derived from this measure, still he would hesitate long before he would endanger the peace and tranquillity of the country by holding out hopes from the passing of this Bill, which in the nature of things could not be realized—which his right rev. Friend himself did not think would be realized, for he stated that he did not anticipate much benefit from it. But his right rev. Friend had addressed to their Lordships some observations with respect to the position in which they would stand after giving this vote. He stated that their position would be an invidious one, because if they happened to vote differently from himself, it would be against the general feeling of the people. That he did not believe. His own experience in the county in which he lived was decidedly otherwise: the feelings of the people there were all the other way; but his was an agricultural county, and public feeling might be otherwise else-

where. But his right rev. Friend also said, that the great majority of the authorities of all the parties in either House of Parliament were in favour of this measure. If he thought so—if he could see in the conduct of those parties sufficient reason to justify him in believing what his right rev. Friend said—he should certainly have distrusted the soundness of his own judgment; but his belief being that the feelings of all parties with regard to the measure were very different from those of approbation, he had the greater confidence in the conclusion at which he had arrived. He grounded this opinion on the repeated and solemn declarations of noble Lords and right hon. Gentlemen on this subject. He would not enter into the question of inconsistency—he was dealing simply with the argument that from these speeches of those parties it was plain that the understandings and the hearts of the great majority of them were against this measure; and if he could presume to follow the example which had been set, of appealing to other portions of the House, he would call upon their Lordships, in the vote which they were about to give, to give their votes as they would do on any judicial question which might come before them—to lay their hand upon their heart, and say, “Content,” or “Not content, upon my honour.”

The BISHOP OF ST. DAVID’S said his right rev. Friend had misconceived what he had said, and had applied to the interests of the Clergy epithets which he (the Bishop of St. David’s) had connected with a different topic. He believed he was correct in saying that the observation he had made was, that he could not consent to consider so vast, so vital, and so momentous a question as this, upon a ground so paltry, and miserable, and insignificant as that of respect for the interests of any particular class; and he must leave their Lordships to determine whether that language indicated any degree of disregard or indifference to the rights and true interests of the Clergy. His right rev. Friend had also misunderstood him on another point. The right rev. Prelate had conceived that he (the Bishop of St. David’s) had made an admission unfavourable to his own case, in stating that he did not expect any great advantages to result from this measure; but his right rev. Friend overlooked the distinction he had attempted to draw. He (the Bishop of St. David’s) admitted that in one point of view — arithmetically — the advantages

which would result from the measure might not be very great; but he had attempted to show why that which was in other respects trifling might nevertheless be of immense importance to the improvement of the religious, moral, and physical condition of the people.

The EARL OF WARWICK said, that, after anxious and careful deliberation on this subject, he had come to the conclusion that it was impossible for him to say “Content” to the present Bill. He could not conceive the necessity for it; and everybody in the country was asking, “Could trade be more flourishing? could agriculture be in a more satisfactory condition?” and this opinion was also entertained by those persons in the country with whom he had had any communication on the subject. In Heaven’s name, then, why was this Bill brought forward? If it were an experiment, he agreed with one of the wisest of men, who said “It is not good to try experiments with States, unless the necessity is urgent, and the utility evident.” It could not be the high price of corn that had rendered it necessary; for although Sir R. Peel had told them that he wished to secure to the farmers by the present law the price of 56s. a quarter, the price of wheat had been as low as 50s. a quarter. Was it, then, agitation which had induced the Government to bring it forward? Why, the agitation on this question was that of a class only, or rather of a part of a class, for it was an agitation solely of the millowners: it had not been joined in by the working classes in the manufacturing districts. The agitation in favour of this measure had been as blasphemous and wicked as any agitation of which he had ever heard; and to show that this was the case, he would read one out of numerous documents which he held in his hand, and which had been issued by the council of the National Anti-Corn-Law League. It was a card which he had received from the office of the “National Anti-Corn-Law League,” which he had kept as a curiosity. This card was addressed to the electors of the United Kingdom generally; and it informed them “that, as intrusted with the privilege of choosing their lawgivers, upon their right or wrong exercise of it depended the happiness or misery of millions of their fellow creatures.” That “at the next election they would have to choose between a bread-taxer and a free-trader, and that this choice involved an awful responsibility.” It told them,

therefore, that "it behoved them to look solemnly before they decided, and to remember that plenty or scarcity, and even life or death to thousands of immortal souls, depended upon their decision, and that they would hereafter be called upon to account for it at that dread tribunal where all mankind would be judged, not by their professions, but by their actions." He (the Earl of Warwick) was at a loss to know how this Bill could possibly be carried; for few noble Lords on either side approved of it altogether, and consequently if all voted as they thought respecting it, it would be rejected by a large majority. In conclusion, the noble Earl said that he had supported the Government as long as he could conscientiously do so; but on this question he felt compelled to vote decidedly against them.

The BISHOP OF OXFORD: My Lords, after what has fallen from my right rev. Friend who sits behind me (the Bishop of Exeter), and from many noble Lords, in the course of this debate, I feel it necessary, holding the opinions I entertain, and being prepared to record a vote similar to that which I have before given on this question, to trouble your Lordships with a very few remarks, explanatory of the reasons which have induced me to vote as I did upon that occasion, and as I mean to do on this. My right rev. Friend (the Bishop of Exeter) expressed great gratification at the appeals which have been made to himself and to other right rev. Prelates on this occasion; and he gave a version of those appeals marked, I may venture to say, with singular skill and subtlety. He said—

"We occupy these benches under peculiar circumstances; we are, as it were, authorities upon morals and religion; and, therefore, noble Lords, anxious to be right upon matters of morality and religion, naturally appeal to us, and ask for our opinion in questions involving those matters. When I require an authoritative statement on legal subjects, I address myself to the noble and learned Lords who sit in this House; and I am sure to have responses worthy of the grave personages by whom they are delivered. I certainly never put questions in order to puzzle or entrap them; and I am always willing to bow to the decisions which they express. Of appeals, in like manner, to the Episcopal Bench, connected with subjects of morality and religion, I shall always be a ready and a willing auditor."

Now, my Lords, I admit at once the propriety of appealing to my right rev. Brethren as authorities upon subjects of morality and religion. I cannot say, however, that such is the character of a great part of the appeals which have been

made to my right rev. Brethren upon this occasion. For the justice of this observation, I think I may safely appeal to your Lordships. What was the tenor of the argument used by the noble Marquess who began the debate this evening? He said, that the Legislature has been for some time devising schemes to raise the incomes of the Clergy; but that the effect of the present Bill will be to diminish those incomes. Is that an appeal to those moral and religious principles which we sit here to advocate and maintain? Is this one of the appeals which my right rev. Friend behind me welcomes with such ecstatic pleasure? And if I turn from this night to those in which the previous stages of this Bill were discussed, what are the appeals which I find to have been made? Perhaps it is in the recollection of your Lordships, as it certainly is in my painful recollection, what language a noble Earl (Earl of Malmesbury) allowed himself to use in addressing the Bench on which I have the honour of sitting. The noble Earl began by making a most erroneous assumption, and stated that the estates of the English Bishops had been commuted for a fixed money payment—a statement which is utterly fallacious and inconsistent with the truth. Proceeding upon this assumption, the noble Earl reminded my right rev. Brethren that their interests were now separated from those of the parochial Clergy, and that the Bill which would lower the incomes of the parochial Clergy, would benefit the occupants of the Episcopal Bench, because, their incomes being fixed in amount, they would get the necessities and luxuries of life cheaper than they did before. The noble Earl told my right rev. Brethren that in voting for this Bill, therefore, they were giving a sordid support to their own interests. I will ask my right rev. Friend behind me whether this peculiar appeal came home to his mind with comfort and delight? I cannot admit that the conduct of the Episcopal Bench, upon this occasion, ought to be regulated by the effect which they believe the measure likely to produce upon the interests of the class to which they themselves belong. My Lords, in my judgment, such appeals as these are not only improper, they are utterly unconstitutional. We do not sit here to represent a particular class; and to suppose that we do so is destructive of all sound constitutional principle. Into the House of Lords are infused members drawn from every profession and rank in society, and so it is com-

posed of those who, by hereditary descent, and those who, by the favour of the Sovereign, sit here to represent, not the interests of the class in which they were born, but the interests of all classes of the community. If it were not so, the Prelates ought not to be called upon to give their opinions and voices upon any measure which does not affect the Clergy; and I am sure that my right rev. Friend behind me would be among the last to welcome any such notion. I cannot, therefore, welcome an appeal addressed to us as if we sat here to consider what is best for the Clergy, instead of what is best for the country. In saying so, I do not mean to disparage or underrate the importance of maintaining a due provision for the Clergy; but then it is because I am convinced that the best interests of the country are inseparably connected with the existence of such a provision, that I am an advocate for placing the Establishment on a sure and safe foundation. One noble Earl (the Earl of Winchelsea) who addressed the House the other night, told us that we were going to do something which would be fatal to the country, and that we ought not to do so. There was only one thing lacking in that address, and that was the faintest shadow of a reason for the statement that we were going to ruin the country. I feel that it behoves me, with such faculties as God has given me, to take as correct a view as I can of the probable results of the measure, and then to follow up my conclusions by my vote. I shall not follow the example of the right rev. Prelate in disclaiming all knowledge of political economy, because some slight knowledge of political economy is necessary for the consideration of this subject; and if the right rev. Prelate says he has none, he puts himself out of the condition of the argument. I would rather suppose that he said this out of modesty, because the right rev. Prelate is a very judge and master in all other matters which come before him in his legislative capacity; and of this whole matter the very alphabet is to be found in the science of political economy. On the surest principles of political economy, so far as I have been able to understand them, I approve of this measure. It is, I admit, an experiment; but when was there ever any new measure deserving to be called great which was not an experiment? All legislation is but a series of experiments. You meet a certain evil by the tentative remedy which promises to embrace the greatest probable amount of

good. I look at this question, my Lords, chiefly as affecting the position and habits of the labouring classes. Noble Lords who have opposed this Bill have been but too happy to appear as the labourers' advocates; but I cannot allow them to occupy that position. The present law, with regard to the importation of corn, must be admitted to be an unnatural state of things. [*Cries of "No, no!" from the cross benches.*] Do noble Lords who cry "No, no!" know the meaning of the term "natural?" In the providence of God, and by the order of nature, wheat grows in the field; it is fed by the dew and ripened by the sun, God working through certain known laws. And does any one believe that the principle of the poor not being allowed to purchase bread on the cheapest terms is to be set down as part of the economy of nature, and the arrangements of Divine Providence? I said that the present state of things is an unnatural arrangement—it may be a necessary, but most assuredly it is not a natural arrangement. Legislation, for the most part, is an interference with nature; good legislation is a necessary interference with nature; but where it is shown to be a needless interference, it is bad. The legislation which follows nature—which as little as possible interferes with and interrupts the blessings and benefits of nature, is the legislation which is alone good. By our present legislation, the labourer is prevented from being that important element in society which he will be under the operation of the proposed measure. The effect of the introduction of foreign corn will be the introduction of competition. [The Duke of Richmond: Competition with foreign labour!] Let it be so; for what is it then which makes a man of value in a life of labour? It is the amount of competition he has to strive against. Be he farmer or be he labourer, what is it that makes him important and valuable to those above him? It is competition which fixes the measure of his value; and, unless by the competition of the foreign labourer with our own, he will never be raised to his due position. The noble Duke smiles. It is agreeable to see a person in a matter affecting his own personal feelings smile rather than be angry; but I do not forget that I am met by a smile instead of by an argument—by a laugh instead of an answer—and I shall go on through the chain of reasoning I was about

to enter upon, although the noble Duke's laugh should increase to the highest degree of exultation. My Lords, in the woollen manufacture, as long as there was no room for competition with foreigners, there was no room for skill; but when competition came in, it became worth the while of the manufacturers to create a better class of labourers. So it will be found that competition generally both requires and makes it worth while to employ a better class of labourers. As long as the growth of our fields is protected by legislative enactments, the grossest form of unskilled labour will be sufficient to enable the labourer to earn his bread, and the farmer to pay his rent. But when you admit foreign corn, the result will be that the owners and holders and tillers of the soil will all suffer if they make no change in their mode of cultivation. Self-interest here steps in, and when they cannot look to the Legislature to protect them, they are compelled to protect themselves, by using the advantages which they possess. The farmers of this country must make an acre of land produce corn in greater quantity. [*An ironical cheer from the Duke of Richmond.*] So completely has the protectionist principle entered into the heart of the noble Duke, that his very faith in the improvement of English agriculture itself has been eaten out by it. The noble Duke cheered as if it was most incredible; but I tell him that English agriculture is capable of large improvement.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND said, that the whole course of his life contradicted this opinion. He had always urged the English farmer to increase his produce as much as possible.

THE BISHOP OF OXFORD: I was not speaking of the whole course of the noble Duke's life, but of the sound of his voice. If the noble Duke, instead of putting his remarks in a shape in which they can be readily understood and answered, contents himself with making sounds, articulate perhaps, but certainly of a very doubtful and easily mistaken nature, he must pardon me if I mistake what those sounds express. Will the noble Duke, will any one say, that the introduction of a better sort of agricultural husbandry will not bring in an increase of cattle feeding, and that it will not be attended by a greater demand for labour; and of labour admitting of far greater degrees of skill than now is possible? Again, let noble Lords remember that this measure is proposed to us,

not by some unsettled political spectator, but by the only two great parties who, as parties, can conduct the government of the country; and in saying this, I am far from saying that I vote for this measure to keep the right hon. Baronet in power. There is an essential difference between supporting a Government, and supporting the present Government. The one is a lawful, and the other an unlawful and treacherous motive. But noble Lords who oppose this measure, appear to me to be continually putting forward self-contradictory assertions and arguments. They say, for example, that we do not give a free vote on a great constitutional question, because we are biassed by a desire to keep the right hon. Baronet in power; and yet they say that we do not ourselves believe that it will have the effect of keeping him in power. Then, again, it is said, that Her Majesty's Government have brought forward this measure on account of a certain agitation and clamour, and the noble Duke cheers me. But then he says further, that this agitation and clamour have been caused by the League; and here again is the same contradiction, for if granted to a pressure from without, it cannot be granted to the League. Has the noble Duke read so little of constitutional history and of the proceedings of this House as to tell me that the League, though they may have raised a large sum of money, ought to be spoken of as a body which the House of Lords need dread? No. The great consideration which gives the League power and influence is this, that the great mass of the thinking men in this country are with the League. And when they speak to us of yielding this measure to a pressure from without, it shows that in the depth of their hearts, and in the centre of their convictions, noble Lords suspect that the opinions of the people accord with this agitation; and they know that then and not otherwise such an agitation becomes fearful. Would the machinery of the League terrify this House, if their objects did not come home to the sympathies of the people? If the League had double their actual funds, and proposed the repeal for instance of the Reform Bill, that agitation would not be dreaded by your Lordships, because there is nothing in the great mass of the English people to answer to such an appeal. The secret, my Lords, is, that in the thinking mind of England, and the feeling heart of England, the opin-

ions of the League are sympathized with; and this is why noble Lords are roused by what they call agitation and clamour. They perceive that there is this feeling risen and rising. They feel that the minds of men have undergone a change, and are ready to support a Government which proposes a measure in conformity with that change. Again, the condition of the working Clergy has been referred to, as it will be affected by this Bill. My Lords, I know no class of persons who encounter more hardships and make great sacrifices more cheerfully than the working Clergy. I have lived too long amongst them not to know this well. I believe that in many cases a reduction in their incomes will be a reduction not merely in their luxuries, but in many cases in the essential necessities of life. But it is a striking circumstance that the Clergy have not raised their voices anywhere in support of the Corn Laws. This has not been from want of invitation, for they have been invited to throw themselves into the battle, with the promise that they would be covered by the capacious shields of their defenders. But they would not respond to the invitation; not because they fear to oppose the Government, for the Table of this House has been covered with petitions against a Bill for the union of the sees of Bangor and St. Asaph, supposed to be especially dear to the leading mind of the Government; because when they did indeed believe that a great national principle was at stake, they were the first and most numerous in coming forward with their addresses to your Lordships; but in this other case, although they suspect that they themselves may be injured—for I admit so much—yet, because they consider that they have no grounds of justice upon which to withstand this measure, they have been altogether silent. I say grounds of justice, because I very much desire that your Lordships should distinctly see that the injustice to them—if injustice it be—injustice to the parochial Clergy was committed by the Tithe Commutation Act, and will not be the fruit of an alteration in the Corn Laws. Before the Tithe Commutation Act the Clergy had a direct interest in the agriculture of the country; but it was judged needful—I will not say whether it was wise or not—that they should lose that interest and take in future an annual sum out of the income of the concern, instead of being, as they had been, sleeping partners in it. And why were they asked

to do that? Because it was said that agriculture would be greatly improved if other persons who would come forward and advance the money were to have the whole interest of that money, instead of the Clergy taking any part of it. What, then, is this Corn Law repeal, my Lords, but the simple acting upon the principle you then established? Since your former Act the clergyman has had no right to claim any share in the interest of the capital which must be spent in improving agriculture, in order that we may compete with the foreign grower. The injury, therefore, was inflicted on the English clergyman, when you took from him an increasing share in an increasing concern, and did not allow him any share in the increasing profits of that concern. And therefore the Clergy, feeling that they have no ground of justice on which to resist this measure, have held a noble, dignified, self-denying silence; have refused to join in the clamour which they might most injuriously have swelled; and have set to all classes in the community an example such as it is rarely the habit or in the power of any one class to set, by showing that they knew there were interests beyond the interests of money, and a reward for themselves greater than the reward for their annual income. And when I say this, I admit that I think it probable that, to a certain amount, the income of the English Clergy will be injured by this Bill; and I do not see how that can be met except in one way—they will be made partakers in that compensation which this Bill will produce in the cheapness of articles of consumption. This, as far as it goes, will be a direct compensation; but there will be another upon which I will say a few words. But, before I do so, I think there is another class which will also be injured by this Bill. I think it right and fair in argument to admit that. It is a class who may possibly have some representatives in this House—I mean the nominal owners of great properties mortgaged to their creditors; and I will say of them that they appear to me to be in precisely the same position as the English Clergy, and they may do well to copy in this respect their example. I think that they will be injured by this Bill, because, as I said, the foreign grower is only to be met by improved agriculture in England—by bringing corn into the markets of a better quality and in greater quantity, with the advantage which greater security of price and freedom from the

liabilities of change, to which they are now subject, will give to such agriculture. But these improvements will require the outlay of capital. Now, in the case of noble Lords who have capital, the money to be laid out will come from the possession of those noble Lords. But I grant you, and it is my bounden duty in argument to do so, that when the estates of a noble Lord are mainly or wholly another's; when they are mortgaged to his creditors; when he has no money to improve his land—then does arise the deep and solemn question which the noble Earl (Earl Stanhope) has this moment put to me with that plainness of language upon which I could hardly have ventured, but which I may adopt, when he said, in a tone of sepulchral demand—"And where is the money to come from?" Now it does appear to me an undeniable fact, that with regard to those mortgaged estates, the effect of your legislation must be that many of those lands must change hands. I deeply regret the necessity: but still I see with its evils many consequent compensations. For we know that the tenantry of a poor proprietor are generally poor themselves; I know, from their cottages, that the labouring workmen of a poor proprietor are lamentably poor. It happened to me, the other day, to inquire into the moral condition of a certain parish, and I was told by the clergyman that it was in the worst state of immorality; and when I asked the cause of this, he traced it mainly to the miserable dwellings of the poor which made everything like decency of life absolutely impossible. I followed up my question by asking, "Why have you not told the proprietor of the estate that he must, upon the higher claims of duty and upon the lower grounds of expediency, lay out some of his money in building better cottages?" The answer I received was, "I have already done so: the case has been looked into, but he says he has no money with which to build cottages." And this, my Lords, is the case with many who, in the common parlance of society, are the owners of vast tracts of land, and who consider it necessary to their territorial greatness that they should be held to be so, but who are only nominally lords of the land; for others really possess that land, and displace all the influence of the proprietor, who alone can feel the responsibility of property with reference to the poor on his estates. He alone can feel that responsibility; and if he does feel

it, he is unable to acknowledge it in any degree, because, instead of having a small property really his own which he could improve, he has nominally a great property altogether beyond his means; and so he is, in fact, reduced to the condition with which I fear some of your Lordships are too familiar, of the farmer with a larger farm than he has the capital to work, and which is therefore altogether neglected, whilst the same man with a small farm equal to his capital would be a good and successful farmer. And, therefore, my Lords, although I admit fairly that there must be much evil in such a change of property, I say that, looking forward to that as one of the possible contingencies of the working of this Bill, yet it appears to me to be no reason why your Lordships should not adopt it; because, in fact, it will be only one means of bringing the whole holding of property into a healthier and better condition—a condition in which it will be more easy to improve the land, and more natural to acknowledge the responsibility which waits upon the possessor of the soil. This, my Lords, seems to me to be a most important view of this question, which it is the duty of a person in my situation, even at the risk of offending some of your Lordships, to present to your notice. My Lords, it is because I think that the condition of the poor is such as to require some such measure as this, that I am an advocate in its behalf. And here, my Lords, I revert to that other compensation of which I spoke before as accounting for the silence of the Clergy. I believe that many of them—many who are acquainted with this state of society—are looking forward to this measure, because they believe that from the effects it will produce, they will minister to a happier, a more contented, a better provided for, and a greatly elevated peasantry. I know that they who live amongst that class, who do not see them only upon their days of forced festivity, drinking out of empty glasses "health to their landlord, and prosperity to agriculture,"—they who see them within their homes and amongst their trials, who visit them when they lie on the bed of fever and of death—I know that those men—for I myself have been for sixteen or seventeen years one of them—are continually grieved in their hearts at sights of wretchedness which they cannot alleviate, and wants to which they can only administer by spiritual consolation. I have witnessed the patient endurance of

the English peasant; and I am convinced that the time is come when the other side of that hypothesis of Lord Bacon, to which the noble Lord alluded, is made good in England. I believe, my Lords, that the absolute "necessity" of this measure can be proved. I know that the Clergy of this country believe that the state of the great mass of the labouring population and the peasantry of England is such that they cannot desire it long to continue as it is. They do not wish to see them and their families suffering from physical wants, and from moral and religious destitution; they do not wish to see them living in cottages from which the decencies of domestic life are necessarily banished, and where their children are looked at in their up-growth only with the anxious feeling that so many additional mouths are to be filled, while the difficulties of obtaining food are daily increasing. Now, the Clergy see these things practically; and, looking round for a remedy, they believe it will be found in anything which increases the prosperity of the country. But some noble Lords say that this measure will not increase the prosperity of the country; that our best markets for our manufactures, our home markets, will be injured; and that we shall suffer more than anybody else. ["Hear, hear!"] The noble Lord cheers that sentiment, and I rejoice in his cheer, because if it be so, what becomes of the argument brought forward with the usual eloquence and power of the noble Earl who at the beginning of this debate told us to calculate on the step we were taking, for that it would be irremediable for us and our posterity? Why irremediable? Such cases, I grant you, there are in legislation—cases where there is no opportunity of retreat. If, for instance, you give way to some strong necessity and admit to a share of power political classes heretofore excluded; here there is no retracing your steps, because the persons who were strong enough to make you give this power will be strong enough to keep it. But the noble Lord says you are altogether in mistake about this measure. It will be ruin to the manufacturers and agriculturists. Then, I ask, my Lords, who is the third party to maintain this measure? Why is it to be irremediable? If it is found that the home markets will be ruined by this measure, will any one of those who claimed this concession stand up in either House of Parliament and ask that it might be continued? If the manufacturers are on the

brink of ruin, if agriculture is on the verge of destruction, they will forget their past dissensions, and ask that this measure shall not continue; they will have found the evil of this experiment, and the utmost harm will be that you will have to retrace your steps and re-enact the former law. Therefore, this argument, my Lords, is clearly most destructive to the other argument from which the opposite side of the House draw their conclusions. The two cannot be held together by any rational man. It cannot be both irremediable, and yet injurious in its working, not to a privileged class, but to all classes alike. Therefore, with the utmost deference to those who differ from me, but with a full determination not to act upon the judgment of others, but to the best of my poor ability to judge for myself upon the subject under discussion, I am prepared, for one, to risk the dangers, and, as I hope, to partake of the benefits of the experiment you are now invited to make. It would ill become me, my Lords, and it is most alien to my feelings, to suppose that your Lordships were influenced by any motive of fear upon this measure. If any such motive be brought to bias your decision, there is but one motive of fear under which your Lordships can have any danger of falling—and that is the fear of being thought afraid. I believe that this is the fear your Lordships should, more than any other, guard against—that you should not, for fear of being thought to have changed your purpose out of fear, refuse to show that the time is come when that which might once be useful has become noxious; for let me remind your Lordships of one of the arguments mentioned in this debate from an agricultural quarter, but in a manner which seemed to me not to savour of any great agricultural faith. The argument was this:—"Protection is the course you pursue with regard to everything else. You nurse carefully and protect the tender fruits of the earth; and you ought to do the same with this tender plant, the agriculture of England." I, however, am not one who think that the agriculture of England is such a sickly and fantastic exotic as to require the aid of protection; I think that all it requires is to be set free from the shackles of protection, and it will assert its own indigenous strength and native vigour. Protection to native industry has become a favourite phrase in reference to this subject; and I can say for myself that I am

one of those most favourable to the protection of that industry. What is protection to native industry? It is to bring it into a field where every opportunity is afforded for wholesome competition. How was it that the great manufactures of England originated? In the beginning their tender youth was sheltered, and perhaps it was needful, by protection, even as men shelter the tender seedling from external violence by a fostering glass; but those manufactures soon asserted their strength as they grew up, and the protection which nursed their infancy would only have dwarfed their vigorous and ripening maturity. When Mr. Burke said at Bristol that he would increase the woollen manufactures by the removal of protection, until England supplied the world, he was hooted off the hustings by such clamours as have not been altogether silent in this House to-night. He was told he was going to exterminate our manufactures. But if you now look to Leeds and the other great seats of that manufacture, you will find how they fully bear out the wisdom of that prophecy, which was based on those great truths which regulate human conduct. If you wish to improve the condition of native industry, teach our population the necessity of human exertion and human skill—teach them to depend for success on their own right arms—on their moral habits—on their inventive genius—and on that ever-favouring Providence whose aid is never withheld from the exertions of good men. If they be thus trained, they may contend with the world, and far more successfully than if they are taught to depend on the sickly system of protection. Make it worth while for that native industry to meet that of the world, and you will be the true protectors of that native industry. You will make its results surer far than they can be at present; for who can depend upon the strength of your legislation, when any Minister rash or traitorous—(Yes! such was the expression applied to one, who, at the price of sacrificing place and everything which a mere party man esteems of the highest value, but fulfilling that which his conscience tells him he ought to fulfil, in order to provide the necessaries of life for a great nation, which Providence has placed under his Government)—may abandon those legislative guards at any moment? [“Hear, hear!”] In spite, then, of the derision which the declaration may provoke, I venture to say that I and the noble Lords

who think with me are, and one day will be acknowledged to be, the true protectors of the native industry of the English people; and, believing this, I would most earnestly beseech you not to be led away by that attractive declamation which has so tickled our ears. I hope your Lordships will not be misled by the splendid declamation with which we have been favoured. [“Hear, hear!”] Was it not declamation? Why, what is declamation? Is it not painting in the most glowing colours certain propositions, which, when they come to be tried and examined, prove to be rottenness and delusion? Was it not declamation to engage the mere feelings of the House by assuming certain consequences as likely to follow from this measure, and then painting the fearful picture of the approaching destruction of our ancient aristocracy, the guardians of the rights of the nation—an idea the most parrieidal that an Englishman can admit into his bosom—and then to rest all this upon the statement that wheat was sold in the Liverpool market at 15s. per quarter?—and when the fact comes to be examined, it crumbles away, and you find that 15s. was 25s. paid on the spot where it was produced, in a distant port, to which was to be added the expense of freight, the outlay of capital, the risk of a voyage—and that, finally, the wheat was of so inferior a quality as to be unsaleable in your market. I entreat your Lordships not to be led away by any such declamation, delightful to hear, but not matter upon which Englishmen and English statesmen should draw their conclusions. I do believe, my Lords, that there is in the minds of the people of this country a deep-seated conviction, a firm persuasion, that your Lordships will in this, as in other matters, gravely, soberly, and wisely consult, not for your own interests, but for the best interests of the whole nation. Here, my Lords, is your strength, and I do beseech you not to shake its foundations. Her Majesty's Government has been said to be mainly culpable in that it did not send back to the electoral classes this question for decision before calling upon Parliament to settle it. My Lords, such a course I believe would have been alike unworthy of English statesmen acting on an enlightened view of their duties, and contrary to the spirit of the Constitution. I believe the very principle of representation as settled by the Constitution of this country, is that

the electoral body, when they have made their election, should leave to the judgment and discretion of those who for a limited time are their representatives the decision of those questions which may arise and call for decision during that period. The reasons for such an arrangement are obvious. And these reasons apply with peculiar force to certain questions. If, for instance, there be one of such a nature that it can easily be made matter of divers representations addressed to and acting mainly on the feelings of those who have to decide in elections, that question is precisely one which according to the theory of the Constitution should be reserved, not for the decision of the electoral body, but for the decision of the elected. A question such as this—one of such a nature that a right rev. Prelate (the Bishop of Exeter) had thought it necessary to apologize to the House for venturing upon its discussion, since if discussed upon its merits it was so abstract in its nature, and so wound up with political economy as to be almost beyond his grasp—this was a question which must be most unfit to be left to the decision of great masses of the people. For before them such a question could not be decided upon its merits by argument, by clear reasoning, by the unbiassed judgment of those who were to decide upon it, but must be carried by appeals to the passions on one side or the other. Now, a question which will be determined by appeals to particular prejudices, is most indisputably such a question as ought to be reserved from agitation, from turmoil, and from passion. I think, therefore, my Lords, that it would be most fatal to the character of a statesman who, having to deal with such a question, should flinch from the responsibility of exercising in such a case the power that has been intrusted to him; who should flinch first for himself, and then for your Lordships, and say that Parliament ought not to decide upon such a question; that he would not take upon himself the responsibility of its solution, but that he would run the risk of exciting an almost universal conflagration, in every borough and in every parish in the kingdom; and this because he would not dare to arrange the matter himself, and would not leave it to your Lordships to determine it. What would have been the result of such conduct—what

else could it necessarily have been—but to set class against class in a struggle of a most doubtful and dangerous issue? what but to tell the manufacturer, “Now is the moment for you to try all your strength;” and to tell the agriculturist, “Now is the time come for you to raise your loud shout for protection to agriculture?” My Lords, it cannot be doubted that the effect would have been to cause this question to be decided as a great agitation question, instead of deciding it by the dictates of the wisdom of the best informed minds, if the Government had gone to the country instead of coming to Parliament for its settlement. Sit in judgment on this question, then, my Lords, I beseech you, divested of party feeling; sit on it judicially, not as the representatives of one interest or another, not as owners of rents, not as owners of land, not as owners of impropriate tithes, who are about to suffer in pocket by the change; but as the natural heads of the great English people, in whose welfare your whole welfare is necessarily bound up—in whose success you must succeed, and in whose prosperity you must prosper. Remember, I beseech you, that the labouring classes of this country look to you, in the patient endurance of long-continued suffering—suffering which, I am sure, no other class of men but the English peasantry could be found to endure with patience—but with the anxious hope that you are about to do something to assuage that heart-consuming suffering. Do not disappoint the expectations that they have built upon your known justice. Do not, above all, mistake the greatness of that suffering for apathy to that which is passing around them. Do not read the signs of the time so fatally amiss. Never was there, in this country, a time in which there was less of outbreking dissatisfaction; but this is so not because the labouring classes are apathetic with respect to their condition, but because they believe that those who have the power have also the inclination to do all that can be done by legislation for the improvement of their situation. Beware, my Lords, of disappointing those just and righteous expectations. Show the people of this country that your decision of this question is based on the broad enduring principle of justice to all, not on the narrow and uncertain one of advantage to the few. In coming to this decision on these grounds, you will establish on the firmest founda-

tions the authority of this assembly: in this assembly, I believe, is laid the main groundwork of British liberty: let not, I beseech you, that sure foundation be shaken by your decision here. Show that you are ready to make any sacrifice—if sacrifice there be—of that which has been only given to classes for the benefit of the people around them. Your power is indeed great; but there are some things which it cannot effect: it cannot stand, my Lords, against the rising tide of a great nation's convictions. Do not be deceived, therefore, by the whispers of flatterers to think, that even you can set your curule chairs on the edge of the rising waters, and bid them, on a principle of hereditary prescription, recede and fall backwards from your feet. Do not, my Lords, let it be said of this House, that the same body which represents the hereditary wealth, property, and rank, does not represent also the hereditary justice, wisdom, and virtue of this mighty people.

LORD ASHBURTON must declare that during this debate he had heard nothing so personal; from no quarter had he listened to such imputation of motives, or such eloquent admonitions to their Lordships to put aside personal motives, as from his right rev. Friend who had just spoken. He had often heard his right rev. Friend before, and never without admiration; but on this occasion his admiration was entirely confined to his right rev. Friend's eloquence, for never, he believed, was a speech addressed to that assembly in which there was less argument. The noble and learned Lord opposite (Lord Brougham) could well appreciate argument; but he (Lord Ashburton) doubted whether the noble and learned Lord, great as must be his pleasure at listening to the hereditary eloquence of the right rev. Prelate, had been able to discover anything in that speech, any single point of reasoning, or anything bearing the appearance of solid argument. His right rev. Friend seemed to speak of the effect of this measure upon the labouring part of the population as if he expected to bring a new class out of the change; but while his right rev. Friend was dwelling on this part of his subject, he (Lord Ashburton) was very much reminded of the eloquent speech of a French orator, at the time of the French Revolution, who said, "Above all things, gentlemen, let us respect property, but let us change the proprietors." Then his right rev. Friend had drawn such a pic-

ture of the cottages of a labouring man, and the miseries he suffered, that any one knowing English life might have asked, "Where could the right rev. Prelate have lived to have got these notions?" Probably, however, his right rev. Friend spoke of what he had somewhere seen; but his (Lord Ashburton's) experience pointed to a different conclusion; he had lived for some time not far from the noble Duke on the cross bench, and he could say that he believed the cottages on the noble Duke's estate could compare, not only with any in England, but with any in the world. His noble Friend had inveighed against the effects of the incumbrances on the land; but it must be remembered that these incumbrances were, in a great measure, the necessary result of the particular state of society to which they belonged. Any person having his money in the funds might easily put aside portions for his children; but if the owner of landed estates only wished to grant a dowry to his widow, or to make any arrangement for younger children, he could not do so without encumbering his land. The state of things which his rev. Friend deplored, had arisen in part, perhaps, from the personal fault of owners of land, and in part from the reluctance to part with an hereditary property, which he (Lord Ashburton), for one, could not condemn. But then his right rev. Friend said that persons in this situation were so poor that they could not afford to keep their labourers in decency; and his right rev. Friend's remedy was to make them poorer; for he said that the change could not take place without suffering on the part of the landowners, which he admonished their Lordships to bear with patience. He complained that the landowners were too poor already, and his remedy was to take away half their property. Now, he would venture to remind his right rev. Friend, when he talked of the neglect in which parishes were left by the owners of land, that there were neglectful clergymen as well as landowners. He was not desirous to say anything derogatory to the Church of England; he believed the Church of England stood higher than any other church in the world for usefulness; but knowing what human nature was, he was not surprised that landlords as well as clergymen were sometimes found to neglect their duties. With respect to the effect of this Bill on the title of the Clergy, it had been stated how it would operate on all classes, and it was also stated that it would

fall most heavily on the parochial Clergy ; it was said that it would fall very unjustly and very heavily, for the first three years, on the farmer, but that after it had come into full operation it would bear severely on the Clergy. Twenty-five or thirty per cent., in his opinion, would be an unfair estimate of the loss to them. This loss would be caused, it was pretended, by the Tithe Commutation Act, and not by the operation of this measure. But that was a wholly mistaken idea; for if the Tithe Commutation Act had never been passed, and they lowered the income from land, the clergyman's income must have been lowered by the same means. All political economists agreed that at given prices particular descriptions of poor lands must go out of cultivation, and others must lower their rents ; but in the case of the clergymen's tithe it was not so : therefore, so far from being injured by the Tithe Commutation Act, clergymen would rather be benefited by it. The Clergy had behaved during the agitation of this question in a way that was worthy of all praise : they had stood by and taken no part in it. But it was not true that they had been solicited to join in the opposition to this measure by the protectionists. It was not that party, but the League, who had been anxious to gain them over to their side ; and every time the League got hold of any man who was half a clergyman, having some local connexion with a dissenting chapel, they trumpeted his name from one side of the country to the other. With respect to the question of the effect of tithe commutation on the incomes of the Clergy, he might cite the evidence of Mr. Jones, a very competent authority, given before the Committee on Burdens on Land, who said that the Church had benefited since the commutation to the amount of two or three per cent. His right rev. Friend with great eloquence had urged that this change, which was to produce cheap bread, must be right because it was in nature. But it was not in nature to have any laws at all. Nature never made the three per cents. Nature never intended that the nation should have a debt of 800,000,000*l.* hanging over their heads. Nature never intended this country to fight battles with the Sikhs, and establish a dominion over countries beyond the seas ; and if the right rev. Prelate was for going back to the times when "wild in woods the noble savage ran," the principles of the right rev. Prelate, he must say, would but little adapt

him for the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. He would make a very bad one. The real state of the case was that they had gone on for 300 years under this system ; and this great and complicated system of British power and British wealth had arisen from it, and yet his right rev. Friend said that all this was rottenness. Certainly if a foreigner had heard the right rev. Prelate's description, he would have thought the country was on the verge of ruin. Nevertheless, his right rev. Friend gave this as a reason for passing the measure ; while, on former occasions, the prosperity of the country was urged by its advocates as a reason for passing it. With respect to the condition of the labouring population, all the evidence they had went to show that in Poland the condition of the labourers was such as would not be suffered in this country for a moment. He believed that the condition of the people in this country was every way better than it had ever been at any former period. But was cheap food always a remedy for distress ? The comfort of an individual labourer depended on his power of commanding the necessaries of life ; and if they looked to the countries of the world, they found the very cheapest food where the people were the most miserable. •He did not say that one was the cause of the other ; but were they quite sure that to establish the one was to remedy the other ? Let them look to the banks of the Ganges, or look only to Ireland, and they would be satisfied that where food was cheapest the people were most miserable. They saw daily that to establish cheapness of food was not necessarily to establish the comfort of the working classes. But according to the views of the right rev. Prelate, everything was to be done by competition, not among ourselves, but with other countries. The man in England who had to cultivate his farm was in a very different condition from the man with whom he had to compete in Germany. They might as well say there could be fair competition in a race where one rider carried 50 lbs., and the other 200 lbs. The former had to pay a large amount of poor rates, and tithes, and county rates—burdens which to the foreign cultivator were to the same extent unknown. These were not the mere theories of political economists, but plain matters of fact and reasoning which any capacity could comprehend. Then the right rev. Prelate went on to show how much the land was to be improved. Now, no one doubted that

great improvement had already taken place in the cultivation of the land in England, and that the English farmer was beyond the rest of the world in that respect; that, in point of fact, the produce of the English farmer's wheat was nearly double that of foreigners. It was, however, plainly impossible that he could go on with improvements if he was compelled to come into competition with men who were so much more advantageously situated than he was. As to what might be the future fate of the country in these circumstances, he would not take upon himself to predict; but it was quite clear that the great mass of these farmers would be completely ruined if this measure should pass into a law. Not only was the land of England at present made to produce nearly double that of foreign countries, but they had the best authority for stating—it had been often said by the Leaguers—that one English labourer was worth three of other countries. He would say, look at the mass of wealth which was produced in many parts of England—wealth so great that never before was so much amassed in one place on the surface of the earth; and all this was produced under the principles which they were now told were such as no country could safely rest upon. The right rev. Prelate had laid it down as the duty of the statesmen of this country to make a series of experiments on such questions as this. A more extravagant proposition he had never listened to. But it was just a sample of what had been laid down by the right rev. Prelate, who had given them plenty of eloquence in place of wisdom. More absurd advice, indeed, than that which had been urged upon them he never heard. He hoped that in our modern days Churchmen would keep to their churches—it would be more to their own credit, and greatly to our advantage; but if their advice was to be taken in questions of this kind, it could not be expected that the country would advance much in wisdom. He would now add a few words on the general question. The right rev. Prelate spoke of the proposed change as calculated to give steadiness in the price of grain: now it so happened, that so far as concerned the Corn Act of 1842, the three years which followed it were the most steady and most moderate in price which had ever occurred, and this at a time when in all other parts of Europe the greatest fluctuations of price had taken place. In France, Belgium, and other countries, they suffered from scarcity; while here, with our own

resources only (for very little grain was let in) the prices remained as steady as if we had had a law fixing the price at which it was to be brought into the market. But the right rev. Prelate said he recommended this measure to their Lordships, because all the great authorities of the country were in its favour; and why, in such circumstances, should they set up their opinion in opposition to it? Was his right rev. Friend so ignorant of what was passing in the world of politics as not to know that the whole of this concurrence of party was a mere job—a mere scramble for the government of the country? His noble Friend opposite (Lord Brougham) need not look so grave upon the matter. This was the solemn weight of authority to which their Lordships were asked to look up with so much reverence. He denied that there were any great authorities in favour of the principle of the measure. On the contrary, if they looked back only a year or two, they would find all the party to which noble Lords opposite belonged in favour of a fixed duty of 8s. And when they looked to such men as Huskisson and Pitt, and even Ricardo, they found them in the opposite scale. Indeed, they had no authorities in favour of the change but those who had been raised up under the Anti-Corn-Law League, and the parties whom they had frightened into proposing the measure. As to the practical working of this measure, he would just remark, that even if he was favourable to its principle, he should still say that the Bill itself would be fatal to the purpose for which it was intended. In 1825, when Mr. Huskisson foresaw a bad harvest approaching, he proposed to let out all the corn in bond at 10s. duty, the price then being 75s.; but so cautious was he not to bring out all the grain in bond upon the market, so as materially to affect it all at once, although the quantity in bond did not exceed 400,000 quarters, that his Bill provided for the grain being brought in by degrees at three different specified times. But here no such precautions were to be used, and thus in the very working of the measure it would defeat itself. There was one view of this question which was regarded as exceedingly important by the advocates of this measure. They talked constantly of free trade, which meant that they would open their ports to everybody, while nobody would open their ports to them. What would be the effect of this but to enable foreign countries to come into our markets, and

undersell our farmers, traders, and manufacturers, while all the time we were prohibited from going into their markets, which were kept closed against us. He would now shortly direct their attention to the question of the Colonies. On the first day of the debate in that House apprehensions were stated, naturally enough, as to the effect this measure would have upon the Colonies, especially Canada; and a reference was made to a pressing letter from Earl Cathcart, in which it was stated that the unanimous opinion of himself and his Council was, that the measure was an exceedingly dangerous one to the interests of Canada. Now when a Governor of the Crown made a statement of such a nature as that, it was a proof that his convictions were very strong upon the matter. The noble President of the Board of Trade, however, in answer, stated that there were later advices from Canada, and that the Legislature of the country had taken a totally different view of the case, and that nothing was to be apprehended to the Colonies from this measure. Now no one could doubt that such was the belief of his noble Friend; that he really did not know of another despatch being in the country; but the next morning there came a representation from the Legislature of Canada, written of course in much stronger language than the letter of the Governor, in which they expressed the great alarm they entertained that this measure would be injurious to the provinces and to the general interests of the inhabitants. There were also petitions from the Boards of Trade in Montreal, Quebec, and Toronto, against the measure. Last night the noble Lord the Under Secretary for the Colonies had given some explanations to the House on this subject; but they were by no means such as to allay the apprehensions which they entertained in reference to Canada. Canada was defensible against the United States and all the world, if the people were in heart with us; but we could only keep that Colony by making it its interest to be connected with us. Those who talked of the grandeur and advantage of a connexion with the British Crown, must be very young indeed in knowledge of the world; people would not be led away by such high-sounding phrases; for if people submitted to be governed, it must be their interest. A noble Lord (Lord Lyttelton) had said that the Colonies "must follow in the wake of the mother country;" but we had enough of that "must" when we lost

our other great Colonies in that quarter, not from any desire to be separated from us originally, but because we made it their interest to separate. Nor was it the value of a Colony only that was at stake; but if we lost it, there must be a long struggle and much bloodshed. The fear of the Canadians was, that the St. Lawrence would cease to be a port. It was said on the previous night that you could get to Montreal at such a price, and to New York at such another price; but in the one case you were still a long way from the sea, with the passage only open for six months. Nothing but the strongest convictions would have induced him (Lord Ashburton) to turn round on the party with whom he had cordially acted; but their Lordships would feel the importance of the question; there was not a point of our Empire which was not affected by the decision.

LORD MONTEAGLE began by complaining that the noble Lord who had just sat down had greatly perverted the meaning of the right rev. Prelate who preceded him. The right rev. Prelate had spoken of particular places in England, in which, from the poverty of the possessors of the soil, their duties towards their tenants were not adequately performed; and the noble Lord had described that statement of an excepted case as a general statement, applying to the whole agricultural interest. The noble Lord had dealt in the same way with other remarks of the right rev. Prelate. With respect to the general question, the noble Lord had touched upon the subject of tithes as a burden upon land, and as a justification of protection to the payer of them. Why, now that tithes were commuted, did it make any difference in the cost of the production of corn, whether it was produced upon tithe-paying land or tithe-free land? Noble Lords ought to be aware how they took their stand upon "burdens on land;" it would raise the question, whether the charges complained of were burdens on the cost of production, or on the rent? If the latter, the Corn Law (placed on that footing) was simply a protection to rent. Were tithes abolished to-morrow, no one would feel the relief but the landlord: there would be a proportionate rise in rents. On this subject he (Lord Montague) would quote from memory a passage in a manuscript pamphlet lately shown to him, found among the papers of the late Sydney Smith. The pamphlet was on the subject of tithes, and was written at the time of great political

and ecclesiastical excitement—excitement adverse to the Church of England. The passage ran thus, in substance :—

“ We sometimes get great instruction in singular and unforeseen ways ; I got great instruction one day from going into the stables of my excellent friend, Mr. Pickwick, who keeps the White Hart Inn at Bath. It was a period when the great macadamizing improvements were going on all over the land. When I entered the stables I found all the horses in the greatest state of commotion and excitement. ‘ What a time for us post-horses ! ’ said they ; ‘ the roads are all being macadamized ; there will be no more rough gravel, no more deep ruts ; this is a most blessed time for us. ’ Upon which an old grey pester in the corner, blind of one eye and lame of one leg, but possessed of great experience, addressing his friends in the stable, said to them, ‘ Beloved quadrupeds, do not exult unreasonably or hastily ; do not believe that our biped masters are making all these improvements for our sakes : they are doing them for their own. If the roads are made smoother and more level, depend upon it it is only to make us run so much the quicker, and carry so much the heavier burdens. ’ ”

Just so the repeal of the tithe would be no benefit to the cultivator of the soil, but only an advantage to the landlord. With regard, next, to the constantly diminishing proportion of the agricultural classes to the manufacturing, this was a condition of things essential to the prosperity of the agricultural interest itself. According to the census of the population, it appeared that in 1811 the proportion in the hundred of agriculturists was 35, and of non-agriculturists 65 ; in 1821 the proportion of agriculturists was 33, and of non-agriculturists 67 ; in 1831 the proportion of agriculturists was 28, and of non-agriculturists 72 ; and in 1841 the proportion of agriculturists had fallen to 22, while that of the non-agriculturists had risen to 78. The result shown by the returns he looked upon as a proof of the increasing prosperity of the country, as every improvement which took place among the manufacturing and trading classes reacted upon the agriculturist. Far from proving that the agriculturist class were lessening in value and importance, it was in his mind only a proof of their progress. Whence did this proceed ? [The Duke of Richmond: From protection.] He would undertake to prove that the noble Duke’s doctrine of protection to all—to the manufacturing as well as to the landed classes—was the greatest possible fallacy, and that so far from leading to justice, it contained within itself the element of the most flagrant injustice. Let them take corn and cotton as an example—he would not say corn and currency. Supposing 10 per cent. put upon corn and

cotton as a protection, would that protection operate equally in both cases ? Not at all. Corn was not exported ; therefore the price was regulated by the markets of this country, and the 10 per cent. protection, if it acted for any purpose at all, must raise the price of corn so much. But how was the case with cotton ? All the cotton manufacture was not consumed in this country ; a great quantity was exported, and, as there could not be two prices for cotton, the price of cotton in this country must be regulated by the markets of the Continent, and must fall to the continental level ; and the ten per cent. was no protection at all. Then, what became of the whole argument of protection to all branches of native industry ? It had been observed by some one, that protection of all classes was general robbery : and he must say that he considered it general nonsense. He was astonished to hear the present measure objected to on the ground of its being a great experiment. Why, was not all legislation experiment ? But the Parliament in adopting this Bill were not adopting an untried principle. The principle had been tried and found to answer, and had been supported by the best authorities, living and dead. The noble Lord opposite (Lord Stanley) had referred to ancient statutes ; and he (Lord Monteaule) would oppose to them statutes of a more modern time. One would look for anything in ancient statutes rather than sound principles of political economy. Trade was not to be made prosperous by passing such Acts as enforced the burying of the dead in woollen, or which rendered their Lordships liable even now to penalties for not wearing metal buttons on their coats. He would read to their Lordships the preamble of an Act drawn up by Mr. Burke. It was to the following effect :—“ That whereas it had been found by experience that the restrictions imposed by several statutes in reference to corn, flour, and several kinds of victuals, by preventing a free trade in the same, had a tendency to discourage their growth, and increase the price,” &c. Such was the preamble of an Act passed in better times than were those alluded to by the noble Lord (Lord Stanley). This was an Act to remove the restrictions imposed on the internal trade in corn. [Lord Stanley : Hear, hear !] True, it was to remove restrictions on the internal trade ; but the preamble showed that all the mischief was done by preventing a free trade. As the noble Lord (Lord Stanley) looked

for authority, he would also state the opinion of Dr. Johnson, who, in reference to the suggestion of a duty on the importation of corn, observed—"Why, Sir, you speak like a savage; would you prevent a man from buying food in the cheapest market?" The authority of Mr. Huskisson had been appealed to; but he was at a loss to understand how that statesman's authority could be appealed to in favour of restrictions on the importation of corn. No doubt, his mind had varied at different periods on the subject; but in a letter which he wrote in 1830, and which contained the ultimate statement of Mr. Huskisson's matured judgment, he said that he had no doubt whatever that these (the corn) laws might be repealed without affecting the landed interest, while the people would be relieved from their distresses. The noble Lord (Lord Ashburton) had objected to a series of experiments being carried on. Why, the history of the Corn Laws was the history of a series of experiments. In 1815, when the Parliament was strongly agricultural, protection for agriculture was obtained: but did it serve agriculture? Why, in 1822, the whole country, under the blessing of the Corn Bill, was in state of distress. [*A cry of "That was after the alteration of the currency."*] Well, if noble Lords said that it was the alteration of the currency that caused the distress, were they prepared to propose the repeal of the Bill which altered the currency? But in the report of the Committee of 1821 the Currency Bill was not put forward as the cause of the distress, neither was it in the speeches made in Parliament. In place of benefiting the agriculturists, the Corn Bill of 1815 then did the agriculturists much mischief. In 1822 the agriculturists had a new Bill, which did them no benefit, and they came again to Parliament for protection in 1826. Again, in 1836, they complained of distress; and, in 1842, they got a new Bill: notwithstanding which, in 1845 a noble Lord declared that the tenantry had, during the past year, lost a great deal of capital and property. Such was the history of protection. But it might be asked, if the system of protection had not benefited the agriculturists, what harm had it done to any other class? He believed that a vicious system of this nature benefited no parties whatever; for while it held out false hopes to the agriculturists, its effects with regard to other branches of the community were most mischievous. His noble Friend

opposite said that this system had produced a greater equality of price than had before existed; but he (Lord Monteaule) was prepared to show that, just in proportion as they restricted the supplies of corn, they occasioned fluctuation of price. If Norfolk was governed by one system of corn laws, and Lincolnshire by another, it was clear that there would be a greater fluctuation of prices in each of those counties than there was at present; and why should not the same result follow the difference of corn laws between Russia and America and this country? His noble Friend opposite had stated on the 6th of June, 1814, with reference to the Corn Laws, that "steady prices were never produced by restriction. Apply the doctrine of restriction to any one county of England, and it will be found that doing so will not have the effect of steadying the prices in each particular county. On the contrary, the price of bread will be alternately high and low, as there is a bad or good harvest in each particular spot." The noble Lord added, "What the whole of England is to any particular county in England, so exactly in this respect is the whole of Europe to the whole of England." He thought he was entitled to claim the benefit of the noble Lord's high authority on this point. There was another subject to which he (Lord Monteaule) wished to refer—that of our dependency for supplies of food upon foreign countries. He was ready to admit that a dependence upon foreign countries for supplies of food might be attended with great danger; but it was a danger to which we were now pre-eminently exposed. If, however, we made our laws what they ought to be, we should render foreign countries dependent upon us. Under our present system, we discouraged the growth of corn abroad, with a view to the permanent supply of this country; but we could not do without it at intervals. His noble Friend who had just sat down seemed to think that for the last three years we had done without foreign corn; but the fact was, that although during the last year we had not required a large supply of corn, we had received very considerable importations during the last three years. His noble Friend would not deny that, taking decennial periods, we required more and more foreign corn; but we did not encourage the foreign producer to grow for our market, for we only took his supplies when we wanted them. By rendering fo-

reigners dependent upon us for the sale of their produce, we should do much to insure the maintenance of amicable relations; but our present system, as he had said, discouraged them from growing corn, and led them to view our arrangements with suspicion. He must confess that he had not expected to hear from any noble Lord during this discussion an elaborate defence of the sliding scale, coupled with an invitation to those who were friends of a fixed duty to resist the present Bill; but his noble Friend the late Secretary for the Colonies, who had come forward as the leader of the protectionist party, had selected as the heraldic badge of his banner the sliding scale. He (Lord Monteaigle) believed, however, from the experience they had of the effect of the sliding scale, which was mischievous to the farmer, to the consumer, to the trader, and to the Bank of England, that no individual would be found ready to come forward and pin his faith upon the operation of that system. It had been said that the Bill now before their Lordships would be most injurious to Ireland; but he did not think the interests of that country would suffer, any more than those of England, by the adoption of a system of entire freedom of trade in corn. He believed the effect of this Bill would be to diminish fluctuation of price; and of all things fluctuation of price was most prejudicial to Ireland. He was glad to observe that all those noble Lords who had referred to the distress existing in that country had done so in a tone of sympathy with the sufferings of the people, and had evinced the strongest desire to concur in any measure calculated for their relief. Unfortunately, however, during the discussions upon the Corn Bill, some persons had been betrayed into expressions upon this subject, which, on calm reflection, they would not have used. They had heard of the humbug of Irish famine; they had been told that no one relied on the tales of Irish distress; and it had been intimated that the cry of Irish famine had been raised in order to facilitate the passing of this measure. Now he (Lord Monteaigle), as one who was conversant with the condition of many districts in Ireland, especially with the southern portion of that country, must remind their Lordships that it did not follow, because they received very favourable accounts of the crops in some parts of Ireland, that great distress might not prevail in other districts. There had been deep

distress in Ireland; and he was bound, in justice to Her Majesty's Government, to say, that he believed it was owing to their early and prudent interposition that the distress had not been more visible. He would take upon himself to say that the distress recently existing in Ireland had been much more severe than at any former period within their Lordships' knowledge. It had been said, over and over again, that in all our commercial measures the concessions were made by this country, and that we got nothing from foreign countries in return. But was not the example of Great Britain likely to be followed by other nations? In a despatch, dated May 30, 1824, written by Mr. Addington, our Minister at Washington, to Mr. Canning, it was stated that the example of Great Britain was adduced by both parties in favour of or against a system of protection. Mr. Addington, however, emphatically added, that if no restriction on the importation of foreign corn had existed in Europe generally, and especially in Great Britain, he had little doubt the Tariff would never have passed through either House of Congress in the United States. The Prussian Government had declared to Mr. Canning that our corn and timber duties were an obstacle to trade with this country. With respect to the price of corn under a system of free importation, he (Lord Monteaigle) had never anticipated a great reduction. That was also the opinion of the late Lord Spencer, and also that of Lord Sydenham. When Mr. Poulett Thompson, he had pledged himself, on the hustings at Manchester, to a free trade in corn, he said, "What I think you will have will be a steadier trade." Mr. Ashworth said, it was not the cheapness of corn and other produce that was wanted, but freedom of trade. A mist lay over the destinies of nations that the human eye could not penetrate. This country was necessarily exposed to great revulsions in trade; and, although we had been hitherto blessed by prosperity, the times of calamity must come. He called upon their Lordships not to continue to place themselves in a position which permitted the people to refer their calamities to laws made by the Legislature. If the harvests were bad, let them say it was a dispensation of Providence; but let not the people attribute their sufferings to legislation, and particularly to the legislation of a class who were supposed to have a pecuniary benefit in maintaining their own laws. He did not

say that this measure would protect the trade and industry of the country from variations and reverses; but he would say, that it would diminish the chances of those variations, and that they, as legislators, would cease to be responsible for them when they gave to trade its fullest scope.

LORD STANLEY: My Lords, it was not my intention to have addressed a word to your Lordships in the course of this debate, after having trespassed upon your attention at such length on a former occasion; nor would I have done so had it not been for the observations which have been made by my noble Friend who has just sat down, which have been so pointedly addressed to me, that, in the absence of all preparation, without a note of any kind, without a single document to refer to, still I think I should not be justified if I were to permit a single day or a single hour to pass without offering an immediate reply to some statements of my noble Friend. And, my Lords, I confess that it is a matter of satisfaction to me, that in an assembly composed of the men whom I have now the honour to address, and opposed by the antagonists whom it has been my lot on this occasion to meet, I may venture to say that there has not been any attempt to answer the statements which I made to your Lordships on the 25th of May last, from the period when we discussed for three days the original proposition of the second reading of this Bill, till the speech which my noble Friend has now made, after an interval of considerably more than a fortnight; and I confess, my Lords, it is an additional gratification I feel that my noble Friend, in professing now to reply to a speech made three weeks ago, has touched but upon a very small, and, comparatively speaking, a very insignificant portion of it. But, so far as he has touched upon it, he shall not have to wait for a fortnight, nor even a week, for his reply. My noble Friend touched upon one statement, which he supposes I made in reference to the authorities which were brought to bear upon the subject of protection in general. Now, my noble Friend and others, whose remarks I do not notice because they were made out of this House, stated that I relied for my defence upon the measures introduced into the Parliament of Edward IV. My Lords, you heard the statements I did make. The President of the Board of Control stated, that from the earliest period of British history the principle acted upon in this coun-

try had not been the principle of protection. I stated the very contrary had been the case, and I quoted the preamble of the Statute of Edward IV. to show that since the time of Edward IV.—and that was all the allusion I made to that statute—not only had protection been the principle adopted at the very earliest period, but that it had been acted upon without intermission to the present time; that that principle had been recognised, sanctioned, and maintained by the Legislature of this country during the whole of that long period. Such was the reference which I made to the Statute of Edward IV., being a very small part of the authority which I brought to bear on this question. But how does my noble Friend meet me? He brings forward another authority; and, my Lords, what authority? The preamble of a later statute. The preamble he alludes to states, that whereas it was found from experience that restraint had been laid in several statutes upon meal, flour, milch cows, &c., which had a tendency to discourage their growth, and to prevent freedom of trade, and to enhance the price of these commodities. And this, said my noble Friend, is an authority in favour of universal free trade, and of the present Corn Bill. But, my Lords, what is the statute to which this is a preamble? Does it regard foreign trade. No. ["Hear!"] No; I say it only relates to our internal trade. And the preamble goes on to recite that if such statutes were put in operation it would bring great distress on the population in many parts of the kingdom, and in particular on the cities of London and Westminster. It then goes on to repeal the Acts against forestalling, regrating, or—in short, my Lords, the statute is nothing more nor less than an Act removing vexatious restrictions with respect to the internal trade of this country; and yet my noble Friend brings it forward as an argument against our taking those precautions which our ancestors have taken against our freedom of trade being a one-sided freedom. My noble Friend is for sacrificing all the advantages which we at present possess, or which we are likely to obtain, on the ground that we shall obtain corresponding advantages from the Legislature of foreign countries. When my noble Friend used the preamble of that Bill as an argument, he should recollect that it applied to a state of things over which we had perfect control—to parties amenable to our laws, and interested in our institutions, and not

to foreigners, who were perfectly independent of us. He cannot legitimately bring such an argument to bear upon a system where, although one party may be brought perfectly under our control, it is perfectly optional with the other, who is quite beyond our reach, to receive or reject our terms. I had the misfortune not to be present when a right rev. Prelate (the Bishop of Oxford) made an allusion to my speech. I understand the right rev. Prelate talked of the importance of going back in matters of legislation to a state of nature; and my noble Friend opposite (Lord Monteaigle) said that restriction ought to be the exception, not the rule, in our system of legislation.

THE BISHOP OF OXFORD: As my noble Friend was not in the House when I spoke, I may as well repeat what I said, and which was, that we should interrupt the course of legislation which nature seemed to recommend as little as possible, and that restriction ought not to be used except upon some plain and inevitable necessity.

LORD STANLEY: My noble Friends about me were under a different impression as to what the right rev. Prelate stated. However, I am bound to take his explanation as correct. But I suppose the right rev. Prelate will admit this to be his meaning—that the nearer we approximate to a state of nature in our legislation, the better. [The Bishop of Oxford: Hear!] Very well; but, unfortunately, all the world will not consent to act upon this approximation to a state of nature. There are a great many things in which we cannot approximate to a state of nature. In our clothing, for instance—for if such an approximation were possible, it might not be decent. Voltaire somewhere says—“*Ce n'est pas selon la nature, cependant je porte les culottes.*” We are not in a state of nature—our whole system is artificial. We impose restraints upon personal liberty for the benefit of the community at large; we are constantly obliged to depart from that standard of purity—from that original state of nature so strongly commended by the right rev. Prelate. We have gradually departed from it since the earliest ages of the world; and I do not think it a legitimate object of legislation to attempt to recur to it. But the right rev. Prelate says, we should approach it as closely as we can. Granted, when we can bring all those who come within the working of our system under our control: but your Lord-

ships must remember that we are legislating for flesh and blood, not for Utopia. Different countries will have separate, or it may be adverse, interests—they have other laws, interests, and objects; and for you to say we will enter upon a state of nature, but allow everybody else to protect themselves and wear a defensive armour, appears to me to be placing the former in the greatest possible disadvantage towards the latter. That is a state of things, an Utopian constitution of society, which never will be arrived at. Mr. Owen, in his system of parallelograms, could not arrive at it. Mr. Owen would have each man work for the advantage of his neighbours, and not to be actuated by any selfish interests. Mr. Owen demonstrated that if the world would but consent to act upon his system of parallelograms, one man for the benefit of the other, mankind would be more prosperous. This sounded tolerably in theory; but when people found they were not working for themselves they would not work at all. These Utopian schemes sounded very well, but they would not work. It was just like the man who invented the most ingenious and beautiful machine on earth, but omitted to provide for the impediments of friction—or like the person who invented a system of projectiles, but forgot to take into account the resistance of air, and the doctrine of gravitation. You must not look to what is good in the abstract, but to what is practically desirable; and as foreign countries will not agree in your scheme, it falls to the ground. My noble Friend referred to Dr. Johnson; but Dr. Johnson, it ought to be recollected, spoke in 1776, when the state of the public burdens was very different from what it is now. A system of free trade there may be, but not with safety to the State, when there is 800,000,000*l.* of debt. My noble Friend referred to a speech of Mr. Huskisson's, who said, the Corn Laws could not be maintained. I do not recollect Mr. Huskisson's words; but what he said I think was, that in the present state of taxation, they could not be maintained. My noble Friend then expressed surprise that I should have ventured to take up the defence of the sliding scale; but the noble Lord has not in any way shown that the sliding scale is pernicious either as regards the fluctuation of the price or the dearness of food. He said that the sliding scale had been given up; but he made the assumption without reason. The no-

ble Lord asserted that the sliding scale must produce great fluctuations of price. Now I say that the sliding scale ought to be judged not by what it "must do" but what it has done. I thought that I had shown on a former occasion that it had prevented fluctuation and ensured steadiness; and I cannot see, therefore, upon what grounds the noble Lord should assume the reverse. But the noble Lord went further: he said that foreign nations would fall in with the free-trade scheme. But he did not say what advance had been made in this reciprocity system with other countries. My noble Friend the Secretary for Foreign Affairs did not hold out any encouraging expectations. I took the liberty of showing the House a few nights ago, the statement of the Secretary to the Treasury of the United States, in which, so far from holding out any prospect of a relaxation in their tariff, he congratulated his countrymen on the free admission of their bread stuffs into this country, and proved that such a system would more and more exclude English manufactures from American markets. Prussia has not reduced the duties on the cotton and hardware of this country, because our Tariff has been relaxed in favour of her corn and timber. Our Legislature has reduced the duties on timber; but, so far as reciprocity is concerned, we have nothing to congratulate ourselves upon; nothing that can lead us to suppose that the relaxation of protection will lead to that delightful state of nature to which the right rev. Prelate has alluded. I believe I have adverted to the more prominent points of the noble Lord's speech; but while I am on my legs, I will refer to one or two statements which have been made, to my great surprise, by the right rev. Prelate, and also to some statements made by my noble Friend the Under Secretary for the Colonies with respect to the colonial part of the question. I heard with great surprise from my noble Friend the Under Secretary for the Colonies, that the only advantage of having Colonies is an outlet for our surplus population: he considered it as a matter of little importance whether the mother country should have their commerce under her control—whether there should be a shipping trade between them, which would serve as a nursery for her seamen, as a means of employing their population—as a market for their goods which was not at the caprice of a foreign rival—all these things my noble

Friend regarded as comparatively trifling. The great thing, according to his (Lord Lyttelton's) theory, was to have an outlet for the surplus population. If he will look on it solely in that light, I would say, cast off the Colonies altogether; for, if that be all they are useful for, they are an incumbrance rather than an advantage. The surplus population would find outlets in the United States, or in any other country blessed with a fertile soil and a fine climate, even though those countries might not be willing to fall into that state of nature to which the right rev. Prelate has alluded. I do not know how the colonists will like the designation which my noble Friend has given their territories—an outlet for the surplus population. They may, perhaps, think, that as they are so valueless to this country, they may as well make the most of themselves, and perhaps impose a duty of 35 or 50 per cent. on our goods. Noble Lords calculate with great confidence on the acquiescence of the Colonies in this measure; but in my opinion you had better wait a little for more certain intelligence. Let us wait until we see the deliberate expression of the people of Canada, and until the opinions of the people of this country are constitutionally expressed. The Government propose a great and a hazardous experiment; they are doubtful of the sentiments of the Canadian people, but yet will not defer the passing of it until the arrival of the next Canadian mail. I can hardly believe that the Government is serious in calling upon this House to force through it so vast and important a scheme, and in the same breath declare they labour under a disadvantage in not knowing what the unanimous feeling of the people of Canada may be, who, for aught the Government knows, may have changed their opinion as rapidly as some of your Lordships have changed yours. Then my noble Friend seems to think that Lord Cathcart is not so strongly of opinion that this measure will be so ruinous as he has before expressed himself. If that be so, let us have the statement of Lord Cathcart. It is right we should know what his opinion really is. Then, have Ministers consulted Lord Metcalfe? He is a man of liberal principles, in favour of general free commercial policy; and if they have not consulted him, they have failed in that which it is incumbent upon them to have done. We have heard what is the opinion of the Legislature of Canada upon the subject; the opin-

ion also of the Attorney and Solicitor General of Canada, expressed in their places in the Assembly, as representatives of the people; and they think that this measure is fraught with ruin to Canada, and that if it is passed they will have no resource but in free trade, and of throwing themselves, commercially, into the hands of the United States. As regards the present state of Ireland, I fully agree in opinion with the noble Lord opposite (Lord Monteaigle), that the repeal of the Corn Laws will have no effect in healing the distresses that at present exist in that country. The noble Lord gives great credit to the Government for the measures they have taken to supply Ireland with labour and food; but they are temporary and palliative, and not permanent or effective measures. The distress in Ireland does not arise from the dearness of provisions, but from the want of permanent employment; it is the want of employment that causes the great destitution that exists amongst the labouring classes. The greater portion of the landed proprietors of that country are unable to dispose of their estates, they have them so heavily mortgaged; which also prevents their being able to reduce their rents, or give their labourers employment. I ask your Lordships, then, how can this measure remedy the evils complained of? You are about to introduce a law, which must have the effect, more or less, of reducing the price of corn, and which, I believe, must also tend to increase fluctuation, to cause a great influx at one time, and a great scarcity at another. My noble Friend opposite, who professed to answer the speech of my noble Friend near me, thought it advisable to abstain from noticing the dilemma into which this measure will, in this way, bring the country. I wish to say a few words on the subject of class legislation. The right rev. Prelate (the Bishop of Oxford) said, that he thought no reference ought to be made to the right rev. Bench on the subject of the revenues of the Church. Now, my Lords, I say that the lowering of the incomes of the landlords is not a matter of simple injury to them, and that the lowering of wages is not a matter of simple injury to the labouring classes, but that it is a general injury to the community at large. So, in like manner, the lowering of the incomes of the parochial Clergy is not a private but a public injury, and is not to be considered merely as a diminution affecting the parochial

Clergy alone. If the Commutation Tithe Bill had not taken place, the Clergy would have been infinitely greater sufferers by the introduction of this measure. If a commutation of tithes had not taken place, a double injury would now be inflicted upon the Clergy. As they would have benefited by an increase of tillage, so in an equal proportion they must have suffered by a diminution. Therefore, I say, that although this Bill will inflict a great injury upon the parochial Clergy, it is not by reason of the commutation of tithes having taken place; for if that had not occurred, the injury would have been much greater. I am quite sure that the right rev. Bench is above the danger of being unduly influenced; yet I may mention that there is a broad distinction between the parochial Clergy and the Members of that Bench who are the guardians of the Church. The parochial Clergy are dependent for their incomes upon the price of corn; but the right rev. Bench have all a fixed salary. The parochial Clergy's income depends upon the fluctuating price of corn; whilst the right rev. Prelates receive a fixed and definite sum of money. I am quite sure that that circumstance will not in any way actuate the right rev. Bench in giving their votes upon this question, and I only mention it for the purpose of showing that a difference does exist. What is to be the effect of a reduction in the price of corn by this measure? If the price of corn should fall, then there will be a fall in the prices of other commodities. What is to be the result of that? Why, there will be a great advance in the value of money. There is one interest which will be benefited by it. You are about to confer a boon upon the moneyed interests of this country. Have you considered the effect it will have upon your national debt? If you raise the price of money one-fifth, you will increase the burdens upon the country in the same proportion. I throw out these remarks, in order that your Lordships may not be induced to adopt this measure without thinking of the effect it will have in increasing the burdens upon this country. The right rev. Prelate spoke of the great reduction that would take place in the price of bread, as well as the increase in wages, that was likely to arise from the passing of the measure, and how the people had been induced to expect that it would be passed; and as "hope was the sweetener of the evils of life," some hope would be given

them that their wishes would be realized. I tell your Lordships not to give the people hopes for the purpose of misleading them, for "hope deferred maketh the heart sick;" and if you held out hopes that may never be realized, you will thereby inflict an injury that cannot easily be remedied, as hope disappointed leads to that which constitutes a sense of evil. The right rev. Prelate said that the smallest assistance to these poor people would be of the greatest service to them; but he should have gone on to show that you were going to give them any at all. My opinion is, that the labouring class will be the first to discover that cheap bread is not a blessing but a curse to them, notwithstanding the sweetened hopes that are held out to them to induce them to put the cup to their lips. My Lords, you say you will bow—and God forbid that you should not do so!—to the deliberately expressed opinion of the people of this country. Many of you, however, are about to vote for this Bill, not that you believe it to be necessary, or approve of its principle, but because it has been passed by the other House—you are going to vote against your own judgment; and before another twelve months has elapsed, you will discover the error you have committed. Do not think that when you pass this Bill, the question is settled. You are about to pass it in order that you may get rid of the annoyance of agitation. Do you think that agitation can only be on one side? Do not imagine that your conceding all to one party, will have the effect of settling the question. I tell you, that when the next election takes place—come when it may—let the measure be now carried partially or entire—that the entire question will be again renewed. The opinions of every candidate on this measure will be inquired into, and by it they must abide. You have yielded to the judgment of the House of Commons—or, I should say, you have yielded to the votes of the House of Commons—you did not alter your opinions—you have altered your votes. The elections come on, and the people confirm their opinions of 1841, and return their representatives, who pass through the House of Commons a Bill repealing the measure you are now about to adopt. What will you do then? Will you be consistent in your inconsistency, and reject it? Having in 1845 voted for protection, and in 1846 voted against it—will you in 1847—should a Bill be sent up to repeal this measure—will you again vote as you are now about

to do? Act, my Lords, upon your own judgment and opinions boldly—act upon them in that constitutional sense in which you are bound to act—till the opinions of the people of the country are unmistakably expressed—vibrating from one point of the compass to the other, according to the various mutations of popular feeling; those manifestations of popular feeling which have been so aptly represented by the mutations so recently displayed by the House of Commons.

EARL GREY, who rose amid some confusion, said it had already been moved that he should be heard; and he thought as his noble Friend (Lord Stanley) had taunted the supporters of the Bill that it required a fortnight's deliberation before they could answer the arguments he used on the former occasion, a noble Lord, on the opposite side to his noble Friend, ought to be heard in reply. Now, he thought there had been no reluctance to meet the speech of his noble Friend. The very same evening his noble and learned Friend (Lord Brougham) had torn absolutely to tatters great part of his noble Friend's speech. [*Cries of "Hear!" and "No!"*] According to the best of his judgment that was the case; and he would fearlessly ask the House and the country whether his noble Friend's (Lord Stanley's) arguments had not been disposed of. Could any one who had heard the noble Earl near him (the Earl of Clarendon) deny that he had proved most conclusively that wherever restrictions had been removed, and free importation had been admitted, a great increase and improvement in the home produce had taken place? His noble Friend (Lord Stanley) had spoken in a triumphant air, and said that his noble Friend near him (Lord Monteaagle) had fallen into a great blunder by quoting the preamble of an Act of Parliament, as an argument in favour of removing restrictions, when the Act relates only to the internal trade, and not to the trade with foreign countries. But the principle was exactly the same, whether they applied restrictions as between county and county, or between country and country. Just as it was the interest of Middlesex to have corn from Northumberland cheap, so it was the interest of England to have cheaper corn from Poland. But the argument of his noble Friend (Lord Stanley) was, that we could not enforce reciprocity from foreign countries, as we did between county and county. Why, however, did his noble Friend shrink from the

argument that money was exactly like any other article of commerce; and therefore that not producing gold in this country we should pay for our corn directly or indirectly by the produce of British industry? It was a new light in the noble Lord that protection was only desirable where we could not have reciprocity. [Lord STANLEY: I never said so.] His noble Friend denied having used the argument; but then in that case the preamble quoted by his noble Friend (Lord Monteagle) was applicable, and there was an end of the mare's nest which he had discovered, that the preamble was only applicable where we could have reciprocity as between county and county. The noble Lord, in his remarks on the subject of Canada, had made a good deal of the letter received from the Governor of that Colony, and he had also expressed a wish that the opinions of the late Governor General of Canada should have been made known on this subject. Now he was happy to inform the noble Lord that the noble Earl behind him (the Earl of Clarendon) had a letter from Lord Metcalfe, in which he expressed his regret that he was not able to come down to that House to state his views in favour of this measure. The noble Lord had used as one of his arguments in favour of the sliding scale, the statement that it was productive of steady prices; and in endeavouring to prove this, he compared the prices of this country with those of foreign countries; and how did he do so? In so far as respected the produce of this country, he took the *Gazette* averages; but in regard to foreign countries, he took the market price of the articles. Could anything be more erroneous than this mode of proceeding? And yet his noble Friend founded an argument upon the result. This year, in the north of England and Scotland, the quality of wheat was so unusually bad, that the old wheat was selling at 100 per cent. higher than the wheat of the present year, the price of the new wheat at one portion of the year being 42s., while the old wheat was 84s., leaving the average of 63s. between the two prices. The wheat of the present year was so bad, it was necessary to have some foreign wheat to mix with it, and which circumstance nominally kept down the prices. It also kept foreign wheat out of the country; and thus there was an apparent steadiness in the prices, while the population was suffering all the inconveniences resulting from a supply of bad wheat. Nothing could be more futile than the attempt to show that the

sliding scale gave steadiness of price. In fact, there could be no steadiness of price unless there was encouragement to produce an article in such quantity, that it could be laid up in store for the purpose of being brought to market when there was danger of scarcity. The noble Lord spoke of the effects of this measure on Ireland; and he illustrated his view by saying that Irish estates were generally heavily burdened, and that the landlords there had no means of contributing to the improvement of their estates. Now, the present measure could only injure such landlords as those in the way of reducing their rents, and thus the noble Lord was led to use the old argument formerly brought forward in the House of Commons, where it was scouted by the noble Lord himself, that the use of a Corn Law was to raise rents, in order to enable landlords to pay their mortgages. It was a naked and explicit avowal of self-interest—it was plainly telling the House to keep up the existing system of Corn Laws, in order to enhance the value of land and increase rents. Was that the ground on which his noble Friend was prepared to go to the country with this question? Something of the same kind fell from him in the course of his first speech. In alluding to what was said in the other House by the Prime Minister, his noble Friend observed that perhaps that Minister would find a pauperized aristocracy as difficult to manage as a proud aristocracy. If an agitator had used this language—if it had been said, in effect, that rents depended on the Corn Laws, how indignant would his noble Friend have been? But when translated into its proper meaning, the language of his noble Friend was, that the Corn Laws were established for the benefit of a pauperized aristocracy. His belief was, that if there was one part of the Empire which would gain more than another by the abolition of these laws, it was Ireland, as it would tend greatly to lessen that keen competition for land which was the great grievance of Ireland, inasmuch as by promoting manufactures in that country it would divert the industry of the people into other channels besides that of the cultivation of the land. The noble Lord had brought forward the old argument, that cheap corn would produce lower wages, and that in the face of facts, that when corn was cheap wages were invariably high. It had been uniformly found so in this country; and he defied any noble Lord opposite to point out

a country where there was peace, order, and security, in which cheapness of corn was not accompanied with high wages. If there were no such restrictions as those experienced under the serf system of Poland or Russia, cheap corn was invariably accompanied with high wages. Indeed, the noble Lord had himself said so. [Lord STANLEY: No, I did not.] The noble Lord had admitted this operation of prices, if not in words, yet in effect. The noble Lord had been shown that in those countries where cheap corn was produced, the wages of labour were high. [Lord STANLEY: Where?] In America, in New Zealand, and in other places.

LORD BROUGHAM hoped the noble Lord opposite (Lord Stanley) would now allow that his speech had been answered. [Lord STANLEY shook his head.] Oh! no doubt the noble Lord did not think the answer satisfactory; perhaps it was less satisfactory to him than to anybody in the House to hear it, coming unexpectedly upon him as it did, when he was in such a state of exultation and exaltation after the success of his able performance, received with the utmost applause by a most numerous audience, especially the parts that were most flimsy, proceeding from the mouth to the ear, but not coming from the brain to the heart; adapted most skillfully to catch that applause by soothing every feeling that was most boiling up in the breasts of the audience, and flattering every prejudice under which they were not labouring, but exulting; as a sacred authority, he thought, said, "glorying in their chains." At such a moment, it must be most unsatisfactory to his noble Friend to have the cup of pleasure, from which he was drinking deeply, dashed from his lips by the little accident of his other noble Friend getting up and answering that speech. His noble Friend (Earl Grey) had, point by point, gone through the whole of it, with the exception of two; and to these two points, by way of supplement, he was about to address their Lordships. It was with very great regret that he did rise to speak, near as it then was to one o'clock in the morning, and when so many must be disposed, having gloated over the speech of his noble Friend, having exhausted themselves with rapturous plaudits, being fatigued in their lungs and throats with their exertions, and when they must be preparing for repose, as from such a state of excitement it was necessary for them; for from such excite-

ment they must readily fall into collapse and inaction. But though they must be detained for a short time from their slumbers, yet he must, as a matter of honour, address their Lordships. He really could not excuse himself to their Lordships if he did not, nor, indeed, would their Lordships at large stand excused; for his noble Friend (Earl Stanhope) had said that they were so feeble, so imbecile, so wretched a set, that they were not able to answer the former speech of his noble Friend (Lord Stanley). That he (Lord Stanley) had not heard what he considered to be an answer to it was plain, from the fact that in his own observations he had carefully avoided making an allusion to any one of those answers which had recurred at the time he made his speech. His noble Friend, intoxicated with the success of that former speech, and not having recovered, after the lapse of two or three weeks, his sober senses, he must now be content to hear somewhat—Whitsuntide being come, Pentecost being fully come, and the time of tongues having arrived, when nobody could be expected to be silent—yet now ventured to say that no one had attempted to answer his speech until to-night, after a fortnight's preparation. Now, he (Lord Brougham) did recollect, what but for his noble Friend (Earl Grey) he might otherwise have forgotten in the multiplicity of speeches, that not a fortnight had elapsed—that not a moment was allowed to pass away, when he himself (Lord Brougham) rose and spoke for an hour and a half in reply to his noble Friend. It might be said that his answer was insufficient: but why insufficient? It was shorter by an hour or two than his noble Friend's speech, he admitted; but why? Was it because he thought the speech of his noble Friend unanswerable? Very much the reverse. No; but he was prevented from going more fully into the matter by his noble Friends below going away. They heard the speech of his noble Friend, and then they retired. It was not to be supposed he would seek to convince those already convinced; arguments were intended to convince opponents, but the opponents had disappeared; and if on that occasion his noble Friend was not fully answered, then it was no fault of his. He had gone over his able arguments shortly because of the reason just assigned; but he had spoken at the moment, and not after any delay at all. But now, there were two points which the noble Earl (Earl Grey) had

omitted to notice, and to which he (Lord Brougham) felt compelled just to direct their Lordships' attention by way of supplement. The first was one of the most extraordinary hallucinations—but that was too argumentative a term—one of the most outrageous blunders he ever heard upon any political matter; he would not say "political economy," because noble Lords professed it to be their qualification for this discussion that they knew nothing of political economy: a right rev. Prelate had done so that night. With the extraordinary ability and acuteness of the noble Lord (Stanley), and his quickness in perceiving the absurdity of any other man's absurd arguments, he (Lord Brougham) marvelled beyond expression at the blunder he was about to mention, and he had communicated his wonder to the noble and learned Lord on the Woolsack, who partook of it. The noble Lord began, "There is to be a fall in the price of corn." That was always assumed; but nothing was so convenient as begging the question, especially upon a subject of nicely balanced evidence and greatly disputed fact. Always beg the question. Some begged it gently, cunningly, slyly; you would think they were quietly arguing, when out flashed upon you at last what they had been doing, namely, assuming the very thing in dispute all the while. Others did it in a more open, avowed, sturdy manner, and were what you would call sturdy beggars. The noble Lord (Lord Stanley) was generally of the gentler kind, and so much the more dangerous. Said he, "There will be a great fall in the price of corn; and, if corn falls, the money price of every other commodity will fall too. Now, the value of the currency rises as the value of commodities falls." Granted. "Then," cries he, "if the value of money rises, look to it, you who have 800,000,000*l.* of debt." God forbid any one should deny that! that was not "begging the question." But then came the consequence—"because the price of commodities will fall one-fifth, and the value of money, therefore, will rise one fifth, you will have added a fifth to all the public burdens." Did mortal man ever hear of such outrageous nonsense? A man had an income of 100*l.*; his taxes were 10*l.*; he paid the 10*l.* as best he could while the prices of corn and other commodities were high. Then comes the Corn Bill; down fall the prices of corn and of other commodities; and, therefore, his income of 90*l.*, after deducting taxes, re-

mained the same. That was the hypothesis. [Lord STANLEY: No, no!] Oh! the noble Lord referred to an entirely different argument. The public burdens remaining nominally the same, the income was increased in value one-fifth; it would buy more corn; therefore, argued his noble Friend, it was a larger sum. But what was the truth? The possessor of that income was just one-fifth more able to pay than before.

LORD STANLEY begged to state that what he dealt with was the case of a fixed income. The diminution of the price of every article consumed raised the value of money. The person who had a fixed income in money was benefited; because a fixed income gave a greater command of commodities, and because a party who was under an obligation to pay in money had to give a greater portion of his substance for the purpose of discharging that obligation. The creditor, therefore, gained by the advance in the value of money, and the debtor had his burden increased, having to pay the same amount of money, but that money representing a larger amount of commodities.

LORD BROUGHAM asked whether he had not given precisely the same statement of his noble Friend's doctrine? His income, he supposed, was 100*l.* He gave 10*l.* to his creditor; that he admitted was worth more than it was before. But he, the debtor, was not worth less. He had 10*l.* to pay as before; but he did not lose, nay, he greatly gained, because he had the benefit of the reduction in the price of commodities on his whole expenditure. It was the bane of the protection argument from beginning to end, that those who pressed it did not believe that one could gain without another losing. The 90*l.* which remained bought one-fifth more commodities than before; and therefore he was a great deal better off, and so was his creditor; but he, the debtor, was none the worse off that his creditor gained while he gained himself. But one word more upon a more serious point. A noble Lord had asked, amidst loud cheers, in reference to the disputed despatch from Canada, and the expectation expressed that later intelligence might show a different state of feeling in that Colony, "Why confine your appeal to Canada—why not make your appeal to England?" There could not be a more plausible argument; but he protested against it on constitutional grounds. They lived under a representative Government,

God be praised—a Government which was not to depend upon constant appeals to the people, whose function it was to appoint not delegates, but representatives; and those representatives were sent to Parliament to deliberate on public affairs. The monster evil of the present day was that the constituents who had delegated that trust to their representatives, niggardly withdrew it, and interposed themselves to decide on those questions which their representatives were appointed to consider, instead of first choosing them and then simply meeting from time to time to express their opinions. The constituency called upon its representative to come before it, and then decided for both itself and him. That was not the Constitution of England. But it was said that was different from making an appeal to the people by dissolving Parliament; and it was held that when a question was vital or paramount, such an appeal should be made. What question was there that had not in its turn become vital or paramount? The intrigues of party would make the most trumpety question paramount at any given time. If, because a question was called a paramount question, Parliament must be dissolved, and an appeal made to the people, there was an end to the representative system—that grand improvement in the administration of public affairs under which the advantages of liberty coexisted with the benefits of extensive territory; they might bid adieu to that system; they were governed by a democracy, and there was an end to representation. Maynooth was a great question; but who asked for a dissolution? No doubt some men went before their constituents; some lost their places in the counsels of the country, but there was no talk of a dissolution. That was the true language of the Constitution. The late Lord Grey—than whom, among his thousand greater qualities, no man ever possessed a more accurate knowledge of the principles of the Constitution—held that persons were sent to Parliament to consult for the good of the Empire, and not for particular interests. Again, in 1829 there was no call for a dissolution on the Roman Catholic Relief Bill. But he was going to state a much stronger case, in which every man was pledged to the teeth to take a particular course. What passed when two Parliaments were elected, one the Irish Parliament of 300 representatives of the people of Ireland, and the

other the Parliament of Great Britain, consisting of 568 representatives? Every Member was chosen in both countries for an express purpose; the Irish Members to represent the Irish people in the Irish Parliament, and the British Members the British people in the British Parliament. Then came the question of the Union. If ever there was a case in which the strict letter of the Constitution might be bent, that surely was the case, because two Parliaments were absorbed into one without any appeal to the people. That was a strong measure. What said Mr. Fox, who objected to the principle of the Union, and to the manner in which it was carried into effect? As to the principle, he thought Mr. Fox wrong; but as to the manner in which it was carried into effect, he thought he was right. Mr. Fox said, when the argument of pledges was used—and he (Lord Brougham) well remembered his saying it—that there was no exception to the rule; that Parliament was chosen for general purposes; and that, if they once refused to pass a measure without an appeal to the people because it was said to be important, then every question would successively become important, and there would be an end of representative government. He did not mean to say that a case might not arise in which a dissolution might be necessary. If Ministers differed from Parliament, or if the Houses differed in opinion from each other, the only course which could be taken would be to dissolve. The noble Lord opposite (Lord Stanley) had been pleased to say that his noble Friend near him (Lord Montagu) had not answered—no, not even adverted, but had attempted to advert to his speech. He would, therefore, to use the noble Lord's own expression, attempt to advert to his speech for the purpose of making but one further observation. The noble Lord (Lord Stanley) had solemnly adjured their Lordships to look sharply as to what they were about, because they had been called on to change their opinions at once. [Lord STANLEY: No!—to change their votes.] Well, their votes; and it was, he granted, a safer expression to say votes than opinions; for you cannot be mistaken in that; it reminded him of an old gentleman once correcting him when he (Lord Brougham) talked of an old maid—"Don't use that phrase; it may be inaccurate." "The word old?" he (Lord Brougham) asked. "No," said his friend, "the other word; it is

safer to say, old single woman." So he agreed with his noble friend, that it was safer to speak of votes being changed than opinions. But also that change was a more important thing, no doubt; for, said the noble Lord, see what a dreadful state of agitation the country would be in next year, or whenever a general election took place; and then, possibly, the people of England would elect a House of Commons which would call on their Lordships to change their vote back again. This was very plausible, but it seemed to him (Lord Brougham) to have no weight. The same argument might be used on every question on which the country was divided; and the result would be that their Lordships, if they attended to such an argument, could never safely pass any important measure, especially towards the end of a Parliament. His (Lord Brougham's) belief was that the country, and even those noble Lords who had expressed great alarm with respect to this measure, would not arrive at the next year without finding those fears chimerical. In conclusion, he must say that he preferred the total repeal of the Corn Law to any modification of it. Against the total repeal he knew several arguments might fairly be urged: among others, the extent of the experiment. The noble Lord was correct in saying that till 1771 there had been no free trade; but since that time all their legislation had been towards free trade, with the exception of the Corn Bills of 1815 and 1828. But he admitted that the present was a great experiment, and that it might have been done more safely, that it might have been better done, had it been done gradually, and with less surprise—less of concealment, he might say—than had accompanied it. He was sure, had a different course been pursued with respect to the measure, it would have saved them much trouble in carrying it through that House; for he verily believed the sudden and secret manner of urging it forward was a main ground of its disfavour with their Lordships. Still, however, he was for a total repeal of the principle of protection; because that was, in his opinion, the only final and conclusive settlement of the question. The sliding scale always had the objection, that it carried within itself the seeds of change and decay. And now he would appeal to the noble Lords who represented so powerfully the great landed interest, and the great solid and permanent interests of the country; and he beseeched them to beware

how they lightly rejected the present measure, which went at once, and not indirectly or circuitously, to their benefit as landowners; because, being final, it let all men—landowners, farmers, capitalists—know where they were. Let the House think of the millions of capital now locked up, as he knew of his personal knowledge, waiting until this question of the Corn Laws should be finally settled. Not one guinea of that capital would go out while all was in suspense—not a guinea would have gone out towards the land under a fixed duty, which on the face of it could never be regarded as a final arrangement of the subject. Let them settle the question, finally and for ever settle it, and that capital would flow throughout the land for purchase, for lease, for improvement, for loan. These were the grounds, in addition to those he had advanced when he last addressed their Lordships, why he should vote for going into Committee on the Bill.

The DUKE OF RICHMOND said, it was not his intention, at that late hour, to trouble their Lordships at any length; but he wished to make an observation or two after the eloquent speech of his noble and learned Friend, which, though it did not contain much argument, was a most amusing display. He agreed with his noble and learned Friend in what he had said with respect to the mischief which would arise if, instead of Members of Parliament being sent, the country should send delegates to the House of Commons; but he did not agree with him in every other part of his address. In 1829, he had pressed upon the Legislature and the Government the necessity of dissolving Parliament; and he did the same thing now; and he did so for the same reason. He maintained that in 1841 the question of protection or no protection was that which had been re-echoed on every hustings throughout England. He did not approve of Members of Parliament giving pledges to their constituents; but he did not approve of their breaking the pledges which they had made; and during the period that he had the honour to represent a city in the other House of Parliament, he had invariably refused to become pledged to any particular measure; but this he would say, that if he was pledged to pursue a particular measure, no power on earth should induce him to forfeit his pledge, and to occupy a position which he should then feel he had obtained by fraud. But he thought the course which unfortunately Her Majesty's Minis-

ters had pursued on the present occasion, would lead to making more delegates than before; for representatives were formerly believed to be honourable men, in whom confidence might safely be reposed. On the one side a man said, I am a Conservative; on the other, a man said, I am a Liberal; and the constituencies of the country, generous as they were, took these Members at their word, and returned them to Parliament. But, now, would these constituencies believe them—could they credit the assertions they made? Would they not know—would they not remember the 112 that unfortunately, if they had not broken their direct pledges, had at least broken the faith which their constituencies had put in them? and this, therefore, in his opinion, would lead to more delegates. His noble and learned Friend said that they, as landed proprietors, ought to let this question be immediately carried; and that he himself was for an immediate free trade in corn. But he would ask their Lordships whether the present Bill was for an immediate free trade in corn? Did they expect to get rid of agitation when they passed this Bill, while for three years they were to have the sliding scale? Upon his honour he could not find out why, except that the men who had broken their pledges wished to look opposite and see men who were in favour of a fixed duty violate their opinions by voting for a sliding scale. That was the only way in which they could account for it; and they all knew that the right hon. Gentleman at the head of the Government was a very sagacious gentleman, as it was called; but on this point he would not dwell, because he never had attacked Sir Robert Peel personally, and he never would. He had a right to attack his conduct—he would not presume to judge of his motives. Well, but it was said their Lordships ought not to encourage agitation. Did not his noble and learned Friend know that noble Lords in that House were but a small body of the landed interest in the country? Was it to be supposed that the landed interest was composed of a certain number of people who frequented the saloons of London, who belonged to the clubs, or attended Almack's? Why, the agricultural and the landed interest of England was a great and important body: their Lordships were not even entitled to be called their representatives; they were too few in number for that, and their possessions were much larger than those of noble Lords. But when they told him that he

could prevent agitation if he wished it, he proudly avowed that, instead of preventing agitation, he would do his utmost to recommend it. He would do his utmost to tell the farmers of England that they had been ill treated, and to recommend them to exert themselves in every one of their counties, and in every one of their boroughs. The question was stated by his noble and learned Friend to be one in which the landed interest alone was concerned; but he would say boldly that the operatives in the manufacturing districts were hostile to this measure; and it was well known that the counties of England were hostile to free trade, or the Anti-Corn-Law League would not have gone and bought votes for these counties. The manufacturers knew well how to expend their money; and they would never have gone and bought fictitious votes in the counties if they had not known that the real votes in the counties were against their schemes. He believed it was a fact that the Anti-Corn-Law League had never, up to the present time, ventured to hold a public meeting in any town in this country without giving tickets to those who attended; and this was a proof that they knew the operatives were hostile to protection. His opinion, however, on this subject being well known, and as he had on a former occasion received the attention of their Lordships, he would assure them that he should not have now risen to trespass on their attention, if it had not been for what he conceived to be a most unjustifiable attack which had been made upon him by the right rev. Prelate with the blue ribbon around his neck (the Bishop of Oxford). That right rev. Prelate stated that the landowners of England knew nothing whatever of their labourers; that they only saw them at their public meetings; and that the Clergy alone, forsooth, knew anything of the habits and wants of the people. He should not have taken this as personal to himself if the right rev. Prelate had not condescended, in the very next paragraph of his speech, to take notice of a circumstance which he understood to have been mentioned in one of the newspapers of the day, where it was said that at a public meeting the labourers drank, out of empty glasses, the health of their landlords. He understood that there was a report of a meeting in one of the London papers, which was held on Tuesday last, and at which he filled the chair. The right rev. Prelate (the Bishop of Oxford) had made, he thought, some allusion to that meeting; and as

the right rev. Prelate had landed property in Sussex, near his, he thought he might have alluded to him when he said the landholders were deficient in the duty they owed to their poorer brethren. If that were his intention, it would have been more manly for him to have avowed it. He listened to the eloquent speech of the right rev. Prelate with pleasure, at the talent which it displayed; but he looked in vain for that Christian charity which ought to be manifested by all, and more particularly by a young Prelate of the Church, one of the youngest Bishops who ever sat in their Lordships' House. He could well understand the gratitude which the right rev. Prelate felt towards Sir Robert Peel, and found no fault with him for that; but he must say that the right rev. Prelate ought not to have made those charges; and he deeply regretted the allusion which had been made to that meeting, because three or four years since he had the satisfaction of seeing the right rev. Prelate upon a similar occasion, which not only met with his approbation, but with the approbation of the Bishop of his diocese, and the numerous Clergy who were in the habit of attending those meetings. The gentlemen of the county had held these meetings for some years back; and he did not think there was anything in their nature which ought to bring upon them either the contempt or the ridicule of their Lordships. They were got up for the purpose of rewarding the honesty and fidelity of the agricultural labourer, who obtained a premium upon the presentation of a certificate of good moral character, and the performance of his Christian and social duties in a proper manner. The labourer dined there, and considered the day upon which this meeting was held as one of the pleasantest in the whole year. There was no intoxication—all was morality and good order. The right rev. Prelate said, the labourers drank the landlords' health out of empty glasses; but he (the Duke of Richmond) could not see how a man could drink out of an empty glass. That reminded him strongly of a saying of Earl Spencer, who, when charged with having uttered something absurd, exclaimed that he had never uttered such nonsense because he was not an eloquent man. He left the House to say how far the comparison might be carried in the present instance. Notwithstanding what the right rev. Prelate said, he would still encourage those institutions, which he thought promoted good feeling and con-

fidence between the labourer and the employer, and were, in fact, productive of the greatest advantages. There was another remark of the right rev. Prelate which he did not perfectly understand. The right rev. Prelate said that the display of friendship for the Established Church came from an unexpected quarter. Now, he (the Duke of Richmond) always supposed the protectionists to be the strongest friends of the Established Church; but he supposed they were now no longer to be considered so. He would just make one remark on the subject of tithes. He consented to the passing of that measure, because it would set the matter at rest; but no power on earth should have induced him to support that Bill if he had thought it was intended to get rid of protection altogether, and keep the average of the tithe at seven years.

The BISHOP OF OXFORD said: I desire to say a few words in answer to the charge which the noble Duke has brought against me. I can assure the noble Duke that one result at least has followed from the contiguity of my small property in Sussex to his large domain: it has made me acquainted with the noble Duke's kindness, care, and attention to the state of the cottagers and the peasants in that county; and I therefore beg the noble Duke will believe what I say most unfeignedly and unreservedly, that if in the heat of debate, not being particularly experienced in debate, I have said anything of the noble Duke which impeached his character in that respect, it was most unintentionally said, and is most sincerely regretted. I can assure him that even if the compliment which he was pleased to pay me, for what he kindly called the talent shown in my speech, were deserved, that, in my estimation, would be a miserable set-off for any lack of charity which such a speech exhibited. I can also assure the noble Duke that I did not in the least degree find fault with that meeting of the peasantry to which he has alluded. Three years ago, I myself, I remember, took a part under his auspices in that very meeting; I have aided to the best of my power similar institutions in other places. I by no means undervalue them; but what I meant to say, however inadequately I may have expressed it, was that such meetings did not at all reveal the real sufferings of the peasantry—that we were not to judge of their feelings as to the present state

of the laws and institutions of our country, by the passing excitement produced on such occasions—that this was rather to be judged of by following them home to their cottages in their daily struggle for a livelihood, and seeing then how they do feel; when we should find that many of the institutions of the country are felt by them to bear hard upon them, and in their opinion, to require alteration. I once more beg to thank your Lordships for the kindness with which you before heard me, and to beg the noble Duke, if he felt hurt by what I said, to receive the assurance of its having been my intention to say nothing whatever which could personally hurt the feelings of any noble Lord.

Debate adjourned.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Monday, June 15, 1846.

CHESHIRE AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION SOCIETY.

LORD DELAMERE was understood to say that he was anxious, in defence of his character, to offer a few words of explanation to their Lordships. The noble Duke (Richmond) on a former occasion had stated his surprise at finding his (Lord Delamere's) name as a member of the Cheshire Agricultural Protection Society. He (Lord Delamere) answered without hesitation that he had never belonged to that society, and that he never had belonged to any society of the sort, and that he believed he had never aided that society by subscription, but that he could not tax his memory; his strong impression, however, was, that he had never done anything of the sort. He now repeated that he never did belong to the Cheshire Agricultural Association; and he felt called upon, as a gentleman and man of honour, to declare that what he had said on the former occasion as to not being a subscriber he then repeated. It was strictly true. The fact was, that when the Anti-Corn-Law League began distributing pamphlets and laying out money for the purpose of setting tenants against their landlords, and began to tamper with the registration, he, with a large portion of the gentlemen of the county did attend a meeting at Northwich to see whether it might not be possible to

defeat the machinations of the Anti-Corn-Law League; and it being considered necessary that there should be a small sum at the command of the Committee, for the discharge of legal, advertising, and other expenses, he had subscribed something and paid it immediately to the chairman; but he had never attended any meeting afterwards, and he never was a member of the Cheshire Agricultural Protection Association, nor any other protection association. If the noble Duke had told him what he (the Duke of Richmond) had stated in his (Lord Delamere's) absence from the House, he should have immediately risen and made the explanation he had just given.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND: It appears, from the noble Lord's statement, that the people in his part of the country do not hear much, neither, I am afraid, do they remember much. Your Lordships may remember, that I got up the other night to justify myself as to the grounds which induced me to believe that the noble Lord was a member of the Cheshire Agricultural Society. The moment I saw the noble Lord in his place I told him what I had stated, though, as there was a debate going on, he might not have heard what I said.

LORD DELAMERE: I give you my word of honour I did not.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND: I am not charging the noble Lord, I beg to remind your Lordships, with a greater offence than has been perpetrated by many of your Lordships—a change of opinion on the corn question within the last two years. I tell you fairly, my Lords, that ever since this Bill came into your Lordships' House, I have come down every night with a list of all the noble Lords favourable to it who have been members of protectionist societies; and I should not be at all surprised if, before the debate closes, I find an occasion of sending to your Lordships what I conceive to be so curious as well as perhaps instructive a document. It appears that on the 5th March, 1844, there was a large meeting of the gentry and farmers of Cheshire, who met in the market-place, and so large was the attendance that there was obliged to be an adjournment elsewhere. Now the first resolution that was proposed at that meeting was—

“That a society be formed for the protection of agriculture; that the objects of this society be not merely the protection of the landed interests against the schemes of the League, but also to op-

pose all measures that may be brought forward, having a tendency to deprive agriculture of that protection to which it was so justly entitled. That this society ought not to interfere with political subjects, but that every effort should be made to secure to the tenant-farmer a fair remuneration for his industry, so as to enable him to give to the labourer a fair day's wages for a fair day's work."

This resolution, my Lords, I find was moved by the right hon. Lord Delamere. My Lords, that is the paper on which I rest my justification. I agree in every syllable of it, and I only wish the noble Lord had adhered to it as stedfastly as might have been expected from the part he took in those proceedings.

LORD DELAMERE: With regard to that meeting I certainly attended it, and it was very numerously attended. But the adjournment spoken of did not take place from the great numbers attending it, but from the fact of our having been ousted by the Anti-Corn-Law League. The resolution alluded to was certainly moved by me, but it was moved in conjunction with many others bearing on the particular circumstances of that period; for then it was that paid emissaries were sent by the League to Cheshire, who endeavoured to separate the farmers from the landlords, and the labourers from the farmers. That resolution was accompanied with others as to registration. I refused an invitation to belong to the Protection Society of Cheshire, nor did I ever pay a halfpenny towards it except the trifle of 25*l.* which was given for the purpose of counteracting the machinations of the League.

VISCOUNT COMBERMERE: I can only say that, as chairman of that society, I always considered the noble Lord as one of our most active and efficient members. As he has now withdrawn, of course I can no longer look on the noble Lord in that light. The noble Lord says he did not pay his subscription. I received this morning a letter from Mr. Harding, a neighbour, if not a tenant, of the noble Lord, who says, as secretary of the Association, "Having seen that Lord Delamere stated that he did not belong to any protection association, or subscribe to the funds of any such society, I beg to state, for your Lordship's information, that Lord Delamere is our vice-president, and that he subscribed to our funds towards the end of last year; and further, that he moved the first resolution at our meeting," that referred to by the noble Duke (Duke of Richmond).

PETITION OF THE MERCHANTS, BANKERS, TRADERS, &c., OF THE CITY OF LONDON.

On the Order of the Day for resuming the Adjourned Debate on the Question, "That the House do now resolve itself into Committee," being read,

LORD STANLEY said: I hope it will not be looked upon as any violation of any previous understanding for proceeding with the Adjourned Debate at once, if I present to your Lordships a petition worthy of your most attentive consideration, bearing immediately on the question now under discussion. My Lords, this is a petition—and I consider it a high honour to be selected by such a body to bring under your notice such a document—signed by merchants, traders, and bankers of the city of London. I will not say that those petitioners request your Lordships to reject the Bill under consideration. I desire not, in the slightest degree, to exaggerate the importance of the petition I desire to lay before you. The petitioners are many of them largely embarked in enterprises connected with our commercial interests; and having to attend to their own private concerns they interfere with reluctance in any political matter whatever, and would be satisfied to leave a question such as this to the deliberate and impartial consideration of Parliament. They have not petitioned your Lordships on the subject of this Bill; nor would they now have done so, had it not been that a petition was presented by the noble President of the Board of Trade, purporting to be the petition of the bankers, merchants, and commercial men of the city of London, in which it was stated that, in their opinion, the passing of this measure was essential to the progressive prosperity of every class of the community. My Lords, if there be any class especially whose interest this Bill purports to be designed to serve, it is the mercantile and commercial class; and, no doubt, a considerable impression was produced on your Lordships' minds by a petition presented by one who held high official station, and which undertook to represent the general feeling of the commercial body. It was the presentation of that petition that brought from their private concerns many of those whose names are appended to the petition which I have now the honour to lay before your Lordships—the petition of the merchants and traders of London, in which they humbly state—and the list of signatures gives fully good evidence they are correct—that they

represent the general opinions of that class to which they belong. They begin by saying that—

“Though desirous to leave so important a measure to the deliberative wisdom of your Lordships, they think it right to state that the commercial and manufacturing interests having been for some time in a state of great activity and prosperity, they see no ground for asserting that this Bill is essential to their progressive prosperity. Your petitioners, on the contrary, regarding the vast extension of commercial enterprise for many years past, and which seems to be continually going forward, do not believe that the Bill in question is essential to the continuous activity of that commercial interest. Your petitioners humbly believe that this is an experiment on a vital branch of our national interests, involving consequences the magnitude of which it is impossible to foresee, and calling for your Lordships’ deep and anxious consideration.”

I told your Lordships that they did not pray you to reject this Bill; but these parties come forward to protest against its being supposed to be the general feeling of the citizens of London, or of the mercantile and commercial classes there, that this Bill was essential or even necessary to the prosperity of the commercial interest. And they go further; not desiring to interfere with the deliberate exercise of your Lordships’ judgment, they yet beg of you to bear in mind the immense and unforeseen consequences involved in this measure, and not hastily to adopt a great and hazardous experiment. I admit that the relative value of the two petitions depends on the signatures appended to each. I shall enumerate some of the names appended to this petition. There is the chairman and deputy chairman of Lloyd’s; the chairman and deputy chairman of the Dock Company; a considerable number of Bank Directors—six, I believe; there is a large number of bankers too; there are the names of Abel Smith and Co., of Curtis and Brown, of Spooner, Attwood, and Co.; of Bevan and Tritton, of Hanbury and Co., of Muspratt and Co.; of merchants there are Baring Brothers, and Huth and Co., without dispute the largest general merchants in the city; of shipowners there are the names of Tyndal and Sons, the largest in the trade; of shipbuilders there are Curling, Young, and Co.; there are thirteen of the principal names engaged in the corn trade, many of the principal houses engaged in the silk trade, several of the principal houses engaged in the iron trade, all the leading houses, without an exception, of those engaged in the Canadian and Australian trade, and many of the principal houses engaged in trade with the other Colonies. My Lords, such is the authority of the names appended to

this petition, (and they are open, of course, to your Lordships for inspection,) who, not desiring to interfere with your deliberate judgment, pray you not to believe that this Bill is universally called for by the mercantile and manufacturing classes of the city of London; and stating that the feelings and sentiments of those interests have been misrepresented to your Lordships. In laying the petition on the Table, I have to express my earnest hope that you will adopt the advice they have tendered respectfully, and consider deliberately the vast experiment you are about to make; and that if you are determined (as I fear you are) to make an alteration in the existing law, you will not only accompany it with due deliberation in your counsels, but that this great experiment will be conducted with a due degree of caution in practically applying the principles of legislation.

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE had the honour some time ago to present to their Lordships a petition from merchants, bankers, and traders of the city of London. He was not aware that his noble Friend (Lord Stanley) intended to present the petition he had now done, or he might have been prepared with an analysis, showing the amount of respectability, influence, and wealth, attachable to the petition he had presented, so as to form a set-off to the petition which his noble Friend had now brought forward. He had no intention to diminish in the slightest degree the authority, or to detract from the weight of that petition; and perhaps he would not have troubled their Lordships but for one or two expressions which had dropped from his noble Friend. One of these expressions was, that the petition which was formerly presented purported to represent the general sentiments of the city of London; and the other was, that those who signed the present petition objected to it as a misrepresentation of the sentiments of the mercantile community. Now, what he wished to press upon their Lordships’ attention was, that the petition he presented did not profess to be anything but what it distinctly was; nor did the observations with which he had accompanied it state that it was more than the petition of merchants, bankers, and traders of the city of London. It did not profess to be the petition of the city of London, but of certain merchants, bankers, and traders in it. He would say, therefore, let the petitions be judged by their relative merits and numbers; but let it not be supposed that the first petition came before their Lordships

under false appearances. He had had no opportunity of instituting a comparison between the two petitions; but since the noble Lord had drawn their attention to the signatures attached to his petition, he (the Earl of Dalhousie) begged to state, that to the petition which he had the honour to present, there were the signatures of twenty-four or twenty-six bankers, instead of six or seven, as in the case of the petition now brought forward by the noble Lord. There were attached the names of 267 merchants and others; but, as he said before, he was not in a condition to institute a comparison between the two. If, however, anything was to depend on this, he asked their Lordships to place them side by side; and he was not afraid of the comparison, whether with respect to wealth, knowledge, or respectability.

LORD STANLEY had nothing further from his view than to impute to his noble Friend anything like misrepresentation. But it would be recollected that a few nights ago, when it was stated that the petition which the noble Earl had presented did not express the sentiments of the city of London, it was asked on the other side, why there was no counter petition. In these circumstances the present petition must have been deemed necessary. He accepted his noble Friend's challenge as to a comparison. He had been authorized to state to their Lordships, that if they compared the signatures of the two petitions, they would find that those attached to the one presented by him represented more than threefold the amount of business transacted by those who had signed the petition of his noble Friend.

EARL GREY, upon examining the petition presented by the noble Lord (Lord Stanley), found that, as originally drawn up, it contained the following passage:—"So little ground is there in their view for saying that it is necessary these measures should be passed with the least possible delay." But it appeared this passage was thought too strong, and the pen had been drawn through it. On erasing these words, it was implied that the opinion of the petitioners was, that the measures ought to pass with the least possible delay. The petition did not venture to ask their Lordships to reject the Bill, but talked of it as an experiment which ought to be decided one way or other. This, which was represented as a counter petition to one, numerously signed, and praying their Lordships to pass the measure,

had not asked them to reject the measure, and its promoters had struck out a passage in which it was represented that there was no danger in delay.

LORD ASHBURTON observed, that there could be no doubt, if their Lordships were prepared to pass this measure, they ought to do so without delay. Such was the whole meaning of the passage referred to by the noble Earl as having been expunged, and he thought so too.

LORD BROUGHAM said, the whole object of the petitioners seemed to be to show their Lordships, that they did not agree with the sentiments contained in the petition presented by the noble Earl (Earl Dalhousie). They did not, however, ask their Lordships to reject the Bill, and all that could be drawn from it was, that there was no unanimity in the mercantile body of London on the subject. In the time of the Income Tax, in 1816, there was a public meeting at the Egyptian-hall, and that would, of course, speak the sense of the city; but that could not be said of either of these petitions. But, at all events, none of the petitioners were for unnecessary delay; they all felt, that if the Bill was to pass, the sooner it did so the better. Now, any Amendment that night in Committee would cause a delay of months. There could, moreover, be no greater mistake than to suppose that the mercantile interests were banded against the agricultural interests of the country; they might differ upon the Corn Laws, but generally speaking the former were for supporting the latter.

Petition read and ordered to lie on the Table.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL— EXPLANATION.

The BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S said, he was sure their Lordships would not be indisposed to listen to the few words he was about to address to them, which had at least as much to say to the question before the House, as the remarks they had just heard, when they knew that what he had to say tended to correct a mistake affecting the personal character of a Member of their Lordships' House. He had not been present at the time the speech was delivered by the noble Lord (Lord Stanley), and he deeply regretted the fact; but he understood that the noble Lord had done him the honour to advert to one or two points of his speech, in which he had been misinformed as to the facts as far as regarded himself (the Bishop of St. David's).

He understood that the noble Lord had been pleased to refer their Lordships to the distinction existing between the sources from which certain of the right rev. Prelates on the benches of that House drew their incomes, and those from whence the incomes of the parochial Clergy were derived. He was aware that his noble Friend had not intended, and most probably had disclaimed the design, to make any invidious construction on the effect of that distinction; but as he believed the noble Lord had also stated that it was a fact likely to make a great impression on the country, he thought their Lordships would admit that he (the Bishop of St. David's) was entitled to say, that the fact on which the noble Lord relied was erroneous. Speaking for himself, he wished to inform their Lordships, as well as the public, that of his own public income very little more than one-third was derived from fixed payments, and that very little less than two-thirds was subject to reduction from depreciation of agricultural produce or from other causes, exactly in the same proportion as the incomes of the parochial Clergy. He did not mean to extend his assertion on this point beyond his own case; but their Lordships would, he was sure, give him some credit for being sufficiently well informed as to his own affairs.

LORD STANLEY would have been glad had the right rev. Prelate, before he had thought proper to advert to what had fallen from him on a previous night, informed him beforehand of his intention. He (Lord Stanley) had not the least idea that he would have been called upon for an explanation of what he had really stated; but it was in their Lordships' recollection, and he recollected it, that he expressly said, he would state nothing personally offensive to the right rev. Prelate, and that he would say nothing of him in his absence which he would not say in his presence. But their Lordships would recollect that the right reverend Prelate had addressed them on the subject of motives, and that he had used these extraordinary words, as nearly as he (Lord Stanley) could remember, "That their Lordships might be fully conscious of the purity of their own intentions; but they must recollect that a very different view of this great question would be entertained throughout the country, and that a very different construction would be put on their conduct." In commenting on that observation of the right reverend Prelate, not supposing it possible

that he could have intended anything offensive to their Lordships, he had made use of words to the effect, that he was confident the right rev. Prelate was as little influenced by any motive of private consideration as he had given their Lordships credit for being, but that the public were free to draw the same inference with respect to him and his motives, as he had thought fit to draw with respect to the personal motives of their Lordships. If there were anything personally offensive in what had passed, it had fallen from the right rev. Prelate, and not from him; because his (Lord Stanley's) assertions, with respect to the operation of motives, went as far as the right rev. Prelate's conviction of their Lordships' purity of intentions. The statement he made, which might not have been correctly repeated to the right rev. Prelate, had been this—and he hoped he would forgive him for repeating it—that there was a wide distinction between the sources from which the right reverend Bench and the parochial Clergy derived their incomes; that the latter were wholly and exclusively dependent on corn for their income; that as the value of that article fell, so their incomes would be depreciated, and they would inevitably be losers by the measure, unless all other commodities fell in proportion; and he had proved that would not be case. By the confession—no, not confession—he would not apply that word to the speech of the right rev. Prelate—but by his own statement, their Lordships were informed that two-thirds of his income depended on the price of corn; but as regarded one-third of it, he was not only protected from reduction, but received a fixed money payment for it. He then took the liberty of showing that all who received a fixed money payment were gainers by this measure, and that was all he had said. He hoped this explanation would be satisfactory to the right rev. Prelate. He had not thought he should have been called upon to make it, and should have gladly explained what he did say, if the right rev. Prelate had asked him to do so in private. He disclaimed all motives, or the imputation of them, and had only pointed out the distinction between the sources of the revenues of the parochial Clergy, and the right reverend Bench, which was admitted by the right rev. Prelate to exist.

THE BISHOP OF SALISBURY said, that the distinction had certainly been stated in a manner which would appear

somewhat invidious, and that effect had been augmented by repetition in other places in a manner still more invidious. He was almost ashamed to trouble their Lordships with a defence against imputations—not intended, it was said—but certainly calculated to exercise an injurious effect, as regarded Members of their Lordships' body, on the public mind. He would, therefore, without troubling their Lordships at any length, state how the case really stood. Out of the twenty-six Members of the right reverend Bench in their Lordships' House, fourteen were altogether free from being placed, in the least degree, in the circumstances which had been stated by the right rev. Prelate, and received no portion of their incomes in payment from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Those Members of the right rev. Bench derived their incomes in the same way as the landed proprietary did, the only difference being, that they derived a larger proportion from the improper tithes, which were more likely to be affected by this Bill, than in any other way. It certainly seemed severe that the Clergy should suffer by the Bill; and its bearing on their case presented an obstacle to him in the way of the vote he had given on behalf of the Bill. The liability of the parochial Clergy to be affected by it certainly did appear to him an argument against the Bill. He did not, however, regret the appeal which had been made to the right rev. Bench, for he believed they were justly looked upon as the guardians of the Clergy in that House. Nevertheless, he thought the injustice which had been done to that body was not so much attributable to that Bill as to the Tithe Commutation Act. Differing, as he did, in opinion on that subject from many of his Friends, he had always held, and repeatedly expressed it, and he believed, that by it the parochial Clergy were deprived of the prospect of any increase of value to be derived from improvement in agriculture. Of the other Members of the right reverend Bench four were in the position of paying fixed charges to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners out of uncertain incomes—the gross amount of their revenue being liable to fluctuation from the operation of this Bill, or of any other measure affecting the price of corn. Of those four right rev. Prelates, three had recorded their votes in favour of the Bill. Thus two-thirds of the right reverend Bench were altogether removed from the possibility of their being under

any imputation as regarded the motives for their votes. One-third of his right rev. Brethren were under the suspicion of receiving fixed payments. But had none of their Lordships any fixed incomes? Had none of their Lordships funded property not liable to be affected by the operations of this Bill? He claimed no exception for his right rev. Brethren from any charges which could with truth be brought against them; but from their position and character, no persons should be more exempt from charges without proper foundation. He thought he had demonstrated that this charge, which it had been intended to apply to them, though it had been brought forward in somewhat an invidious manner elsewhere, was totally without foundation.

The EARL OF MALMESBURY said, it must be admitted that above all men the right rev. Prelates ought to be most feelingly susceptible as to any charge which might touch their character and high position; and feeling that he might have excited in some degree the great susceptibility they had shown in this measure, he would beg leave to say a few words on the subject. He must say that the susceptible feeling the right rev. Prelates showed had been somewhat slow in its approach. He had spoken on the second night of the second reading, humbly delivering his opinions as he had a right to do. He seldom troubled their Lordships, that having been, he believed, the second or third time he had troubled them; but it was a long time ago, and he had been in the House several nights since, when no notice was taken of it. Not one word had been said of his remarks until last Friday, when they had been commented on by the right rev. Prelate. He thought it needless to assure their Lordships there was not a Peer in that House who would more unwillingly offer a word to them which could possibly look like an imputation on the right rev. Prelate. He stated that they stood in that position with regard to the parochial Clergy, that it was a part of some difficulty for the right rev. Bench to interfere on the present occasion, and that the people might possibly misconceive their motives in doing so; nor had he alluded to the right rev. Prelates in any other sense. He utterly denied that any other wish had entered into his heart than to do them justice; and he acquitted them entirely of being actuated by any unworthy motives. But he had been called to task by the

right rev. Prelate, who had made a most able and eloquent speech, for having taken the liberty of addressing himself to that right rev. Bench. He was not accustomed to take liberties, nor did he think he had taken any liberty in expressing himself as he had done. If out of that House the right rev. Prelate should ever condescend to give him (the Earl of Malmesbury) his spiritual advice, he would gladly admit and follow it; but in that House, in all temporal and in all political subjects, he should, in everything but ability and eloquence, consider himself and act as the Peer of the right rev. Prelate.

The BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S rose to explain. The only object he had in any observation he had addressed to their Lordships, was to remove the impression which might have been made within that House, and in the country at large.

The EARL OF HARDWICKE wished to remind their Lordships that there had not been anything like personalities introduced into the debates, until certain right rev. Prelates had addressed the House for the first time. Those right rev. Prelates to whom he referred had not been accustomed to take part in such proceedings, nor had they possessed any opportunity of seeing the manner in which many of their right rev. Brethren conducted themselves. Those right rev. Prelates never had ventured to impute motives to any of their Lordships in the discharge of their duties, and had set the House a bright example of dignified and becoming conduct. And he now gave the right rev. Prelates to whom he alluded his advice that they would take this example and warning, that it would not be very wise, as regarded themselves, for them in future to impute motives to any of their Lordships in reference to anything which might arise in their Lordships' House.

The BISHOP OF OXFORD rose to address the House amid some confusion. He appealed to their Lordships' sense of justice to hear him for a few moments. It would be impossible for him to suffer the lecture which had been delivered to him—and he would add no epithet to that word, for he considered it would quite suffice to express his meaning—it would be impossible for him to suffer the lecture which the noble Lord had thought it proper and seeming to address to two right rev. Members of that body, who sat with him in that House as his Peers, without saying a few words in reply. He was in the recollection of the House, when he appealed to all he had said; and he fearlessly challenged contra-

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diction, when he asserted that he had imputed no motive to any noble Lord in the beginning of his speech, and had guarded against doing so. In the heat of argument, and in discussing what he believed to be a great national question, upon which, after the best and most earnest consideration he could bestow, he had come to a clear and decided opinion, he might have been led into a warmth of expression which he had not intended. If that had been the case, and if he had said anything offensive to any noble Lord, he was at once ready to admit it, and to apologize for having done so. But as to submitting to the imputation which had been so wantonly and improperly brought forward, that instead of confining himself to argument, he had imputed motives to their Lordships, he would not do so, and he rejected the charge altogether. It was a very easy thing for noble Lords to stand up in their places and make such charges as these, and to make charges of youth and inexperience; but was a man who for forty years had studied, and that not carelessly, books, men, and manners, to be declared incompetent to deliver his opinions, or to be taunted by the noble Lord with being a young man? Surely it were a greater shame for any reasonable being to be on the wrong side the question as an old man, than as a young man. But he was not very anxious to throw aside the censure of the noble Lord, by any desire to escape by the plea of great senility. He had confined himself to argument, which was, he believed, found to be troublesome; and it was far easier to give lectures on imputed arrogance, than to take the edge off argument which had been listened to and received. It had been said, too, that he had set the example of introducing acrimony and personal altercation into the debate; but he could appeal to the noble Duke, whether, when he had drawn his (the Bishop of Oxford's) attention to a slight slip, a wholly unpremeditated allusion which had risen to his lips in the moment of speaking, and with which he concluded the sentence, he had not at once retracted it. Now he did complain publicly of that pseudo lecture which had been delivered to him with such extraordinary gravity by that noble Lord, with whom he was in private on terms of friendship. He could not, however, suffer that noble Lord on the common ground of that House to assume the privilege of imputing to him assertions and motives which he could not prove.

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The EARL OF WINCHILSEA said, that having had the honour of a seat in their Lordships' House for many years, he could most confidently state, that if ever he had heard a lecture in his life, it certainly was contained in the speech of the right rev. Prelate in the last night of the debate. So strong a lecture he had never heard. Not only had he designated the speech and arguments of the noble Lord opposite (Lord Stanley), which, in point of eloquence and effect, had never been exceeded in that House, as a mere declamation—as “actual rottenness;” but he had the presumption to say that those of their Lordships who had stated, and stated honestly, that they were the friends of the labouring classes, had other motives for their conduct. He had hoped to have heard the right rev. Prelate prove that this was a landlord's question. Had he done so, he (Earl Winchilsea) would have doubted the motive by which he thought himself actuated. He would not occupy their Lordships' time any further than by saying that the right rev. Prelate knew but little of the agriculture of the country when he talked of improving it by introducing the competition of the foreign labourer, the labour of the serfs of Poland. He could conscientiously say that he deeply regretted the speech of the right rev. Prelate; and he thought that the noble Lord (Lord Stanley) who had spoken from the other side of the House, had given as perfect a description of that speech as could be imagined.

The EARL OF GALLOWAY had heard the speech of the right rev. Prelate, and the animadversions which had been made upon it, and must express his deep sense of the injustice of the latter. During his speech the right rev. Prelate had been frequently subjected to the most unseeming interruptions; and it was a marvel to him that the right rev. Prelate should have been enabled with so much good temper to bear with those interruptions. There was sometimes something very sharp in the retorts of the right rev. Prelate; but there was nothing unparliamentary in the speech. He believed that the attacks launched to-night against the right rev. Prelate showed how deeply those who made them felt the truth of the remarks which had called them forth.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL—COMMITTEE.
—THIRD NIGHT.

House in Committee.

The preamble was agreed to.

On the Motion that the First Clause stand part of the Bill,

The DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM rose to propose an Amendment of which he had given notice. He moved it, he stated, with the hope that he might be enabled to induce their Lordships to agree to the alteration of the First Clause. He was no party to the Bill; he thought it uncalled for and dangerous, and he wished to propose his Amendment simply with the view of doing what he possibly could to save some remnant of protection to the agricultural interest. By the Bill as it stood it was proposed that after the 1st of February 1849, the duties to be enacted in the schedule should cease, except that a nominal duty of only 1s. per quarter should be levied upon the import of wheat, oats, and barley. His object was to continue some degree of protection by proposing to leave out the date of February 1849, and to continue the sentence with the schedule which their Lordships would find in the fourth page of the Bill, and which provided to the landed interest an amount of protection to the extent of 10s. when the price of wheat fell to 48s. per quarter. If their Lordships agreed to his proposition, the effect would be that the farmers, after February, 1849, instead of finding themselves protected by a nominal duty of only 1s., would be still able to rely upon a protective duty to the extent of 10s. per quarter. He repeated that he was no party to the Bill; nor would he in the slightest degree sanction it; but he suggested this course as the best which, under the circumstances of the case, now could be adopted for the agricultural interest. As he saw around him many noble Lords who had taken active parts at agricultural meetings and protection societies in holding out expectations to the farmers that by their exertions they would be able to maintain protection, he hoped and trusted that on this occasion noble Lords who were in that position would go along with him and give him their support. Many of their Lordships too had stated their preference for a fixed duty: they were therefore to that extent protectionists, and he claimed their votes as well as those of the advocates of the sliding-scale. As they were now arrived at a point which was finally to determine whether or not they would grant any degree of protection at all to the agriculturist, he hoped that they would pause before entirely overthrowing the hopes of the farmer. He had repeatedly stated his objections to this measure, which he thought unnecessary, un-

called for, and fraught with danger to every class of the community. They had now an opportunity of materially altering, and, as he believed, amending it, without interfering with the vote which they had given for its second reading, and of aiding him in reserving some shadow of protection to the agricultural interest. If they passed this Bill as it at present stood, they would, many of them, he was sure, in the course of a few years, or even sooner, regret the step which they had taken, and the vote which they had given. He implored their Lordships to set aside all party feeling in dealing with this question. Let them not look to those in office or those who were to come into office. Let them not record a vote to prop up an Administration, at the risk of injuring the great interests confided to their charge; but let their Lordships boldly come forward, and honestly and conscientiously record their opinions. Depend upon it, whatever the result might be, they would always have the satisfaction of reflecting that they had acted with clean hands and consciences, according to their views of what was best suited to promote the interests of the country at large. For himself, he threw aside all private feeling and individual friendship, humbly endeavouring as he did to discharge his duty to the best of his ability; and he would sincerely say that he had never given a vote more honestly and conscientiously than that which he should record in favour of the Amendment which he now begged to propose to the House.

The Question having been put,

The EARL OF RIPON stated that he felt it to be his duty to object to the Amendment. While he did so, however, he must state that he was not at all disposed to impute to his noble Friend that in bringing forward his Amendment he had in any degree compromised his principles upon the subject. As their Lordships had affirmed the principle of the Bill by giving it a second reading, the noble Duke was fully entitled to propose any alterations which in his opinion might tend to mitigate the evils he apprehended from the operation of its general principle, and to render it more compatible with the welfare of those interests upon which he thought it would have an injurious effect. He (the Earl of Ripon) would take this opportunity of saying a word as to some observations which fell from a noble Lord behind him the other night. That noble Lord said, with reference to this particular part of the measure,

that he could not conceive what had induced Her Majesty's Government to adopt a modified sliding-scale for a period of three years, except for the purpose of effecting a species of compromise, and in order to satisfy those who might have been expected to object most strongly to the introduction of this Bill. Now, he begged to say most positively and distinctly that this provision was not introduced with any such notion. He would not have been a party to any attempt at such a miserable compromise; but, on public consideration entirely, he did give his conscientious support to this provision of the Bill. The reason for the introduction of that clause was this—as a very great change was about to be made, it appeared to the Government advisable that there should be some gradation in the process of effecting that change. Some persons might be of opinion that if a great change was to be effected with regard to an important interest, the more expeditiously it was carried out the better; while others might consider that it was necessary a certain time should be permitted to elapse before such a change came into full effect. In dealing with questions of this nature, Parliament had repeatedly acted on both these principles; and he certainly thought, with reference to this particular measure, that it was most advisable some time should be allowed to elapse before it was brought into full operation. The sole motive for the introduction of this provision was a desire to mitigate those evils which were likely to arise from the greatness of the change in contemplation; and on this ground he adhered to it. It appeared to him that his noble Friend's Amendment was of much greater importance with regard to this Bill than the noble Duke seemed to suppose. He (the Earl of Ripon) would not allude to any circumstances which might hereafter arise if this Amendment should be carried; but he begged to say that the Amendment did, in point of fact, involve an entire alteration of the principle of the Bill, for it professed to give permanency to that protection which it was the object of the Bill, after a limited time, to remove. Those, therefore, who approved the end and object of this Bill, certainly could not consent to an alteration which would defeat that end, and prevent the measure from effecting those purposes for which it was introduced. For his own part, he (the Earl of Ripon) could not support this proposition; and he did not see how any noble Lord who had voted for the se-

cond reading of the Bill could support the Amendment of the noble Duke. But the Amendment was objectionable even as regarded the object of his noble Friend. The noble Duke himself did not appear to attach any great importance to it. His noble Friend had said that his object was to preserve a remnant of protection; but he (the Earl of Ripon) could not think that it was desirable to preserve a remnant of protection, for it had been contended that the remnant was not worth having. From the arguments used over and over again by the opponents of this Bill, he presumed that such a degree of protection as was established by this clause would be most inefficient, and could only serve eventually to occasion severe and unmitigated disappointment. If the agriculturists were to have protection, they ought to have an efficient protection; but it appeared to him, that to propose to establish in perpetuity the protection given under this clause, was to tender to the agriculturists what really was not worth their acceptance. What security could his noble Friend have that that protection would be maintained? What ground was there for supposing that any plan like that proposed by the noble Duke could be regarded as a permanent measure? What advantage, then, were the agriculturists to derive from the adoption of his noble Friend's proposition? He (the Earl of Ripon) would not now enter into the general question. He would only say that he considered, if the noble Duke's proposition was adopted, it would only delude and disappoint the agriculturists; and he thought their Lordships would be very ill advised if they assented to the alteration proposed by his noble Friend.

THE EARL OF CLANCARTY: My Lords, as the Amendment moved by the noble Duke has raised the whole question of the principle of the Bill, I trust I may be permitted to take this opportunity of offering to your Lordships a few observations upon it, which I am the more anxious to do from the very important bearing—I fear very injurious effect—it is likely to exercise upon the progress of agricultural improvement in Ireland. I can assure your Lordships, and especially noble Lords connected with Her Majesty's Government, that in considering this question, and in attending to the arguments that have been offered on either side in the course of the discussions that have taken place, I have done so with an anxious desire to give my

support to the measure. To myself, as to most of your Lordships, the question of free trade, and especially of a free trade in corn, was a new one; it has never till now been seriously discussed in this assembly; and so far was it formerly from finding favour with your Lordships, that, not many years ago, the noble Viscount opposite (Viscount Melbourne), then at the head of Her Majesty's Government, characterized the repeal of the Corn Laws as an act of insanity. I, therefore, had no greater prejudice to overcome than many of those noble Lords, who, formerly divided only as to the mode of giving protection, are now in favour of free trade. If, my Lords, I had any prejudice in the matter, I can truly say that it inclined me to look with favour upon the quarter from whence this measure has been proposed; for, however disappointed and deceived I have felt by the policy of the Government towards Ireland—a policy, the weakness, inconsistency, and ill success of which cannot be better illustrated than by the necessity that has resulted from it for the enactment of a Bill for the protection of life called the Coercion Bill—I yet cannot forget, nor will the country forget, that it was by the talents and energies of Sir Robert Peel's Cabinet that the finances and commerce of the country have been raised to their present prosperous condition from the slough of despond in which they were left by the Government who quitted office in 1841. But, my Lords, when I examine the character of the policy which has produced the good results we see around us, I find that it has been essentially the policy of protection—of protection to native industry generally—but, above all, protection to the corn grower. Not, indeed, a high protection, which would operate to the prejudice of the community, for the benefit of a class, but a protection as low in amount as would consist with the due encouragement of agricultural industry. Such was the sound principle upon which protection was afforded by the Act of 1842 and subsequent Acts; a policy most ably stated and defended by the noble Lord the late Secretary for the Colonies in his unanswered, though not unassailed, but unanswered because unanswerable, speech on the second reading of this Bill. I shall not, my Lords, trouble your Lordships by entering into a general discussion of the Bill; but I must be permitted to notice an argument which appears to have had great weight with many noble Lords who are in favour

of the measure, I mean what is called "the force of circumstances." Happily it is not here as elsewhere that the agitation of the Anti-Corn-Law League can have any influence. Could any pressure from without induce your Lordships to forego the consideration due to important measures, you very soon would lose the confidence and respect of the community, which now is, as it ever will be, your best support. The argument which has operated so strongly with many of your Lordships is the rapid increase of the population; an increase proceeding in geometrical rather than in arithmetical progression, and occasioning the necessity for a proportionate increase in the supply of food. My Lords, I most fully admit, that it is a duty of the first magnitude to provide that the population should have food cheap and in abundance; but it appears to me that the argument cuts directly against the present measure—against the abandonment by the State of the duty of regulating the supply of the food imported from foreign countries. It is true there are restrictions upon the import of corn, but they operate only to prevent a glut in the market; they cease to operate when their operation would be injurious. But whether you maintain the sliding-scale or adopt a fixed duty protection, in either case you stand upon a vantage ground to treat with foreign nations for the supply of food should the necessity arise for doing so; but if you remove all restrictions, and throw open the trade to foreign nations, what security have you, when you become dependent upon them for the supply, that they will not impose duties that will raise the price of bread much higher than it has ever been made by duties paid into the British Exchequer. The argument is not a new one, but it is one which has never been answered satisfactorily; and until it is so, it appears to me perfectly conclusive against the Bill. I beg, my Lords, shortly to advert to another argument which has been brought in favour of this measure, considered as part of a general system of free trade. Notwithstanding the admission in Mr. Gladstone's despatch to the Governor General of Canada, that "Her Majesty's Government have on several occasions endeavoured to make arrangements with Foreign Powers for the mutual relaxation of tariffs—but almost uniformly with ill success," we are told that our free trade must be successful. How? Through our own free agency

alone. I confess, my Lords, that I never understood what this meant until the debate on the second reading in this House, when it was explained by a noble Earl opposite (Earl of Clarendon), once distinguished as a diplomatist, to mean, that our manufacturers could, with the aid of the smuggler, be enabled to defeat the commercial restrictions of foreign nations, and to find a market for English goods in every country in the world. Such a doctrine I certainly did not expect to hear in this House, and still less propounded from the lips of a diplomatist, at the same time professing his preference of such a trade to one dependent upon Treaties. I cannot think, my Lords, that if our commerce is to be extended by means of a contraband trade, it will be either respectable or conducive to the interests and security of those engaged in it: nor does it carry with it much promise of a cordial relation with the Governments of foreign countries. I have always looked upon the smuggler much in the same light as the illicit distiller or the poacher. Offences against the customs, the excise, and the game laws, are, indeed, only offences in the eye of the law; but though only *mala prohibita*, they commonly lead to offences which are *mala in se*. If, therefore, I have felt surprise at the doctrine of a contraband trade being advocated in your Lordships' House, how much greater was my surprise at finding it not merely acquiesced in, but sanctioned, by a large majority of the votes of the right rev. Bench, who have manifested so great and unusual an interest in this question. The right rev. Prelate (the Bishop of Oxford) who spoke last on Friday night, and charmed the House with the eloquence of his declamation, challenged your Lordships to appeal to the Bench, not upon the paltry interests of a class, but upon questions of morality and religion. I accept the challenge of the right rev. Prelate; and I put it to the Bench whether it can consist with the interests of morality and religion for the Parliament to connive at and encourage a smuggling trade—whether it would not better consist with the Christian character of British subjects, in whatever countries they carry on the business of trade, that they should be mindful to "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," and "render to all their dues—tribute to whom tribute, and custom to whom custom is due;" but it seems that in the train of evils to arise from free trade, there is to be the violation of precepts

having a much higher sanction than any your Lordships could confer. And now, my Lords, one word upon Ireland. Soon after the policy of Her Majesty's Government was announced, I heard the remark made by a gentleman well acquainted with the circumstances of Ireland, that "the Irish landlords will be either very ignorant or very good-natured if they consent to a repeal of the Corn Laws." The observation, my Lords, appears to me to apply just as appropriately to Parliament as to the landlord class; for, happily, they are perfectly identified in interest with the whole of the community. But so far as the peculiar interests of the Irish landlords are concerned, I will take it upon me to say, notwithstanding the aspersions that have been cast upon that class to which I have the honour of belonging, that if a sacrifice were necessary for the general good, they would be as ready to make it as would the landlords of England, and much more so than those whose property is not in land; for among landlords there is a feeling of responsibility which does not in the same degree attach to the fundholder or the manufacturer. It is not, however, upon the landlords, but upon the occupiers and cultivators of the soil, that would fall, in the first instance, the consequence of this impolitic measure. And I will show your Lordships how that is: The rents of the proprietary in general are moderate, regulated at what, one year with another, the land is well able to yield, after remunerating the labour of the farmer. Thus it is that in 1835, when the prices were very low, I believe lower than it is contemplated they will be under the operation of free trade, the rents were fully sustained. Now who, my Lords, were the losers by the low prices? The farmers, and only the farmers. Again, my Lords, let me show you how it will bear against the cultivators of the soil. There has sprung up of late an active spirit of agricultural improvement in many parts of Ireland. Wastes which were formerly almost worthless, or yielded a very small rent for the coarse pasture they afforded, have been improved and brought under cultivation; in confidence, no doubt, that the improving tenant would be permitted by his landlord to reap the fruits of his labour and enterprise, but in confidence, also, that the Corn Laws would be maintained. Now, the landlords have performed their part: the benefit of these improvements, where they have been made at the tenant's expense, has been left in

the hands of the tenants. The rents have not advanced with the increased productiveness of the land; but if you pass a law by which the price of the agricultural produce is to be lowered, the injury to the improving tenant is the same: the check, the discouragement to future improvement is the same as if the landlord had raised his rent. Thus, my Lords, it is upon the occupiers of the soil that, in the first instance, will be inflicted a loss and an injury by your proposed legislation. Circumstanced as properties in general are in Ireland, it is not easy to bring about new arrangements between landlords and tenants; and the necessity must first become very palpable before the proprietor can consent to a sacrifice of income. Then, my Lords, look at the political consequences of this measure. If its tendency is to make this country dependent, it is to make Ireland politically independent. The peculiar privilege of free trade in the markets of this country enjoyed by Ireland, as a consequence of the Union between the two countries, was noticed by the noble Lord opposite (Lord Montagu), in his admirable speech in 1834 in defence of the Union, as the greatest among the benefits Ireland owed to that great event. The noble Lord, then a Member of the House of Commons, commenting upon Mr. O'Connell's speech, said—

"Does the learned Member recollect the passing of the 46th Geo. III. c. 46, which has given to Ireland a free trade in corn? Was not that a concession favourable to Irish interests? Do hon. Gentlemen venture to disregard the consequences to Irish agricultural industry of the free intercourse in corn between Ireland and England? . . . If they think that an unrestricted intercourse with the best and richest market for agricultural produce in the world is of no advantage to Ireland, there cannot be any argument urged that will influence their opinion. . . . I may therefore point out the free trade in corn with England as one of the most substantial advantages which Ireland has derived from the Imperial Parliament—an advantage not confined to the rich or powerful, but creating a new demand for labour, and thus improving the condition of every cottager in Ireland. This I make my first point."

Now, my Lords, by this Bill Ireland will cease to be indebted to the Union for her free trade in the English markets. Her peculiar privilege will be lost, and she will have no greater advantages in the English corn trade than any foreign country. Attaching, as I do, great value to the Union, which, well cemented, I believe would be greatly for the advantage of both countries, I cannot but lament that anything should be done to weaken it. Much injury has

been done by the free trade in religion; the sympathies of the two countries are not what they were. I warn your Lordships that these experiments in legislation may prove most detrimental to the best interests of the Empire. I believe, my Lords, that the interests of all classes are united in the maintenance of a moderate and well regulated system of protective duties. And, feeling this to be the case, I shall give my cordial support to the Amendment moved by the noble Duke.

EARL STANHOPE supported the Amendment, and stated that previously to affording his reasons for this support, he wished to say a few words on what had fallen from a noble Lord who had addressed the House upon the subject of the Bill. The real principle of the Bill was to be found in its preamble, that it was "expedient to alter the laws relative to the duties on corn." In that view he fully concurred—that was, in that principle of the Bill as contained in the preamble—though he was opposed to the change involved by the Bill now before them. But if the principle of the Bill was contained in the preamble, it appeared a monstrous absurdity, that the Bill should exhibit in one place the necessity for a free trade, and in another effectually negative the principle by a limitation. The most arrogant statements had been used with respect to the operation of the Bill. The condition of the country at a future period had been given, and statements made of the position of things, which could be seen by no man not possessing the gift of prophecy. No man could predict the condition of this country three years hence. An event, for instance, might happen, which all might hope was far, very far distant—an event which would plunge this nation into a condition of confusion, anarchy, and war. No man could affect to see the position in which the commercial and financial interests of this country would be placed at the expiration of any limited period. How then could legislation touch the matter? The country should have judged on the change, the Ministry should have made an appeal to the country; though this appeal they had not dared to make, because well aware of what that appeal would produce upon an oppressed, an outraged, and an indignant people. No change of the character proposed should be made, but under the deliberation of a Parliament called for that purpose. Under such an appeal, no base sycophants would probably have been

found—sycophants who have crept like filthy reptiles towards their own purposes; under such an appeal, no such creatures as these would have been found, for they would have retired to their own native obscurity. He could never forget the emphatic declaration of the noble Viscount lately at the head of Her Majesty's Government, that the repeal of the Corn Laws was the wildest and the maddest project that had ever entered into the brain of man. He thought that the noble Viscount, in justice to himself, in justice to the country, which might otherwise form an injurious opinion of his character, ought to be ready—whether he was able or not was a different question—to explain how it was, that without having recanted his opinion, without any change of circumstances, he should, a few evenings ago, have voted for the second reading of this Bill. He did not undervalue small minorities—it had often been his fortune to vote in small minorities himself—but when some noble Lords opposite boasted that they had formerly been in small minorities upon this question, and that they had now become the majority, he must say that had that been his case, however agreeably he might have been surprised by the change, and whatever the advantages might have been, still he would call upon them, in justice to themselves and to the country, to vindicate their conduct. He had heard several noble Lords, whose memories now appeared to be steeped in oblivion, speak strongly in favour of protection; and, indeed, a very short time ago the principle of protection was unanimously maintained on this side of the House, and all but unanimously on the other; but whatever influences might have been at work to convert them, he could not suppose that they had turned round with the same facility and complaisance as was shown by nine Members of the Cabinet, who after they had resigned office because they disapproved of this measure of the great dictator that sat in the Cabinet, a very few days after resumed office again, prepared to carry through the very measure which they had before disapproved of. This was a digression which he had been unavoidably led into, because one reason which induced him to vote for the Amendment of his noble Friend was, that it asserted the principle of protection. But at the same time he entreated their Lordships not to misunderstand him, or to suppose that he had departed at all from the principles which he formerly maintained,

as if he now thought that the present amount of protection was too much. On the contrary, he thought, that putting aside the principle of protection which was thus asserted in the Amendment, the amount of protection it proposed was ludicrously inefficient; but the whole Bill to which this was an Amendment was fraught with so much injustice to the agriculturist, that the Amendment would be better than its passing; indeed, rather than have this Bill, he would infinitely have preferred a total, immediate, and entire abolition of all protective duties. One of the remarks of Her Majesty's Ministers—who, as Milton said of kings, were strong in legions though weak in argument—was, that this measure was the necessary consequence of the measure of 1842; and that those who disapproved of the present Bill ought to have voted against that measure. This did not apply to him, who had voted against the measure of 1842; but it argued as if Ministers had then abandoned the outworks, that they might now be able to give up the citadel. In conclusion, he begged, that in justice to himself it would be distinctly understood, that in voting with the noble Duke, he did not pledge himself to adhere to this modification of the sliding scale or any other; he wished to keep himself, as he had ever been, and, as long as he had life, should remain, free and unfettered to support any other Amendment that might be proposed in the Corn Laws, without being restricted to an Amendment like this, which could not, and ought not to be, a final measure.

LORD BEAUMONT was anxious to state his reasons for voting for this Amendment, lest his conduct might be construed into an unqualified support of a system which would, in his opinion, be absurd, if considered as a measure of efficient protection. The House had already decided the question of protection, and he did not intend to revive it; still he thought that those who thought with him ought to take this one more opportunity of recording their opinions against the Government measure. But besides that, he supported the Amendment because he thought they were wrong in abandoning after three years all duties on corn, and thus surrendering entirely one main source of their revenue. Another reason was, because he believed, contrary to the opinion of the noble Earl (Earl of Ripon), that instead of this delay of three years being of advantage to the farmer, it would be of very serious injury to him.

His third and perhaps his strongest reason was this, that he thought they had no right whatever to legislate this year for another Parliament, which would sit before the measure of their legislation would come into operation; they had no right to act upon a principle which they dared not act upon immediately, but which they were seeking to saddle upon others that were to follow them. What did they know of the probable position of this country three years hence? Might not some other party soon hold the seals of office? And what right had they to legislate for any future Ministry? Again, every argument in favour of the present measure was founded on the present position of affairs—some peculiar to this year, some peculiar to the state of Europe; and not one of which might be in existence in three years' time, when the Bill was to come into operation. Nay, the very contrary state of things might be in existence then, for all that they knew; and yet the House was called on to legislate in the dark for a future and distant period. Some maintained that they were only now arrived at that state of things when they must adopt the principles of free trade? If they were right then, why not carry out their principle, and adopt free trade at once? But instead of that they damned their own opinions by their own acts, and gave the lie to their warm professions in favour of free trade, by deferring it for three years. The proceeding certainly did not savour much of courage on the part of the Ministers, or they would at once have adopted the broad principle of free trade. If he was not afraid of using offensive language, he would say that it was a sneaking way of carrying out their principle. Then, with regard to the second argument he had used, namely, that instead of a benefit, the delay of three years was an injury done to the farmer; what was the operation of this Bill? It announced to the whole corn-growing countries of Europe, that at the termination of three years they might introduce corn into this country duty free. Now, there was no country at present which had much surplus produce to send; but three years was exactly the time to allow foreigners to bring their soil into a proper cultivation for wheat, and thus enable them, without difficulty, to glut our markets. The expectation of a new market would induce foreign speculators to hold back a large quantity of corn for the termination of the three years, and then pour it into this country all at once; caus-

ing thereby a general derangement of our trade, both abroad and in the corn market at home. If we had adopted free trade at once, perhaps next year the demand would have been greater than the supply; and thus, by raising the prices abroad, foreign countries suffering under the rise of price would have called on their Governments for some further restriction on exportation; or, at any rate, the speculators would not have been able to inundate this country with the same quantity of cheap corn as they will probably collect for the expiration of the three years. Then, again, they allowed a man whose covenants with his landlord were not properly considered, time to exhaust his land, either with the intention of leaving his farm, or under the idea that the land must, of necessity, be thrown into pasture. Again, what did they do in another respect by fixing on the exact period of three years? As their Lordships were aware, "the four-course system" was the common one in England. Well, the effect of the present measure would be, that everybody would try and make such arrangements as to avoid having wheat sown in the winter preceding the year of free trade. And what would be the consequence? Why, that in that year there would scarcely be any wheat the produce of this country. They would endanger the whole order of cultivation, and instead of having, as at present, one quarter of the land growing wheat, another quarter oats or barley, and the rest green crops, seeds, or turnips, we should have one year all wheat, another year all barley, and so on with everything else. Instead of the present regular quantity of land in white crops, we should have a large breadth in one year, and a very small in another, owing to the derangement in the rotation of cropping, caused by the unfortunate selection of three years as the advent of free trade. Whoever framed this Bill was, he maintained, profoundly ignorant of English farming. By passing the present measure, too, they would be guilty of the absurdity of adopting a pretended sliding scale for three years, without any of the benefits of the sliding scale.

LORD KINNAIRD: Why, then, do you seek to perpetuate this absurdity?

LORD BEAUMONT said, that they did not seek either to establish or perpetuate it; but they would not support a measure now, which was only to interfere with it in three years, because they did not wish to legislate for a future Parliament. He

(Lord Beaumont) would ask, too, had they any right to cut off the source of revenue which the corn duties afforded? How did they know that the state of their finances at the end of three years would allow of such a sacrifice? If they would not put a tax upon the corn because it was an article of general consumption, what right had they to keep up a tax upon any article of general consumption? The argument against this tax was an argument against all taxes on the necessities of life. The question was now one of revenue. If they could not tax foreign corn for revenue, they could not tax any article of food, clothing, or furniture. The Bill was one which was calculated to make every farmer a free trader; and there could be no doubt that if this measure was passed, there would not only be an attack upon the customs duties, but there would be, and with much stronger reason, an attack upon excise. If they dared not, upon principle, tax the foreign grower of corn, why should they tax the farmer of England for his barley—why should they tax him for attempting to make sugar out of articles the produce of his soil—why should they tax his hops—and why should they forbid him to grow tobacco upon lands that would not grow wheat? And the matter would not settle there—it would extend to the subject of tithes. He differed altogether on this subject from the right rev. Prelates who had spoken. He said, that after this Bill passed, gross injustice would be done to the landowner by the Tithe Commutation Act. How was the Tithe Commutation Act arranged? They took an average of seven years, which was a period of high farming, induced by protection. Those seven years were the basis of the Commutation Act; and it must be remembered that in those seven years land was brought under the plough, which, if this measure passed, must be thrown back again to pasture. The effect of this would be that the land reverting to pasture, would, for seven years, be saddled with an arable tithe. In proof of this he quoted several cases given before the Committee on Lands Burdens, to show that even now there were farms which their owners would gladly lay down in pasture if they were not deterred by the amount of tithe. In other cases, again, where the land was poorly cultivated, previously to the Tithe Commutation Act, he admitted that the landowners had benefited. He contended, farther, that the mea-

sure would alter the whole landed property of the country. Taking the rent of the land in England, according to the income-tax returns, at 45,000,000*l.*, or, what he thought would be nearer the mark, at 40,000,000*l.* sterling—for he knew that three and a half millions of tithes and fines, and other sources of revenue, were included in the larger sum—and assuming that farmers ought to make three times their rent, that gave an amount of 120,000,000*l.* But if this Bill only depreciated farming produce 20 per cent, the effect would be that the landed property in the country would be reduced from 120,000,000*l.* to 96,000,000*l.*, while the amount of charges in the shape of taxes, &c., continued the same. This was a measure by which they would raise the value of money, while they would reduce in proportion the value of all other kinds of property. Would it, then, be just to reduce the value of property to this extent, and yet leave the same amount of money charges upon it? The State, which received a land tax, or the titheowner who received money payment, would benefit to the extent of the increase, so that it cut unkindly in two ways on those who did not receive a money payment. The man with a fixed income in money would be able to purchase so much more on account of the reduced prices in the market; but the farmer, while he received so much less for his produce, would have to bear the same amount of money payments as now. If they acted with justice, they must reduce the taxation on the particular interests whom the Government measures affected. The fact was, the Legislature must, in the event of the success of the scheme, come to the consideration of local taxation which pressed with peculiar severity on the land. Then, if they reduced this species of taxation, they must throw the burden upon the Consolidated Fund. In other words, they would increase the demands on the Exchequer, while they sought to demolish a chief source of revenue. By the present measure they were throwing away a million of money at least which might be procured without raising to the amount of a single farthing the price of corn in this country. He did not think that the small duty of 2*s.* or 3*s.* a quarter made any difference whatever in the price of foreign grain when sold to the people of this country. At Dantzic the exporters were not guided by the price of corn in the continental markets, but in the English markets; these foreign merchants looked to the London market, and

when this market rose, so wide a margin always existed between the original price of the grain and the price it fetched in London, that they could add two or three shillings a quarter without any diminution of demand. Instead of the continental average regulating prices in Dantzic, the London prices alone influenced the exporting merchants. They watched our market, and could adapt themselves to it with advantage. The measure would involve a great sacrifice of revenue, and benefit none in the end but the foreign exporter. He would vote for the Amendment of his noble Friend on the cross benches, although he thought the protection which was really important had been virtually destroyed by their former vote, and the present proposal could not restore it. The principle of protection being entirely abandoned, they were now bound to consider the question of revenue. They were about to legislate not for the present, nor for the next three years, but for a future period of a distant date. They were depriving the Government of that future day of a rich source of revenue which they were unwilling to sacrifice themselves, and binding a future Parliament to terms they themselves rejected. The Government ought to have courage, and manfully bear the evils which their measures brought with them, and not to entail upon their successors the results of a disastrous policy. In conclusion, he would remind their Lordships, that though they had abandoned the principle of protection, they had a revenue to provide, and that if they acted consistently with their newly adopted policy they must be prepared to sacrifice one-half their custom duties, and two-thirds of their excise; and, moreover, that while they were keeping up, if not increasing, the general and local taxation of the country, they were diminishing the incomes of those on whom that taxation almost exclusively fell; that the foreigner would profit most by the present measure, and that he might find it his interest to use the command he must necessarily acquire over our corn markets, for the purpose of embarrassing the state of our finances. He had spoken so often on this subject that he was ashamed to detain them longer.

The MARQUESS OF BUTE thought the Amendment proposed by the noble Duke would not afford much protection to the agricultural interest. He did not wish to undervalue anything which fell from the noble Duke; but it struck him, that what

the noble Duke suggested to their Lordships could not furnish any assistance worth speaking to any branch of agriculture; and if the Amendment did not offer any real and substantial good to the agricultural interest, they had much better be without it. In expressing this opinion, he thought he was merely enunciating the sentiments of a great many farmers in this country; for they considered that any measure of protection, however slight, would be regarded by the rest of the community as invidious; while it might afford to the possessors of it but very slight advantages. From conversations he had held with many farmers, he was persuaded it was their impression that either an effectual protection, or none at all, was for their real interest. He must frankly tell their Lordships that when he began public life, he thought protection was the principle upon which the policy of this country ought to be regulated; but having been directly or indirectly engaged in matters directly or indirectly connected with the commerce of the country, his opinions had undergone considerable change. He now thought that protection, as far as commerce was concerned, so far from being a benefit, was a positive injury; and he thought that, even as regarded agriculture, it was not serviceable. He confessed that he did not view with any great apprehension the measures before Parliament; and having made inquiries in various parts of Scotland and England, was inclined to think a great many of the more intelligent farmers regarded them with as little alarm as he did; even in the districts where the greatest alarm prevailed, the more enlightened farmers did not participate in it. As to the duty spoken of by the noble Lord, he was able to say that if they imposed a duty for the sake of revenue, they would act diametrically opposite to the wishes of the occupiers of land; though he did not at all mean to say that the occupiers of land were to dictate either to their Lordships or to the other House of Parliament. As regarded the question of tithes, about which so much had been said, he must say that he did not coincide in the extreme opinions expressed on either side; but thought the result would be somewhere between both—neither absolutely ruinous, nor very injurious. He would vote against the Amendment of the noble Duke.

The EARL OF HARDWICKE would not again have troubled their Lordships if he had not felt very strongly on this subject.

He would trouble the House with a few details upon points which had not been sufficiently enforced. He could not at all agree with the noble Marquess, that the farmers of England were averse to a duty for the sake of revenue. His impression was, that their only feeling would be one of anxiety to contribute in that way to the revenue; and such a duty, let it be remembered, would, at a very moderate rate, bring in a revenue of one million sterling. After the Bill passed, he believed they would hear no more about free trade from its present advocates, the manufacturers; but they would find then nobody would be such a free-trader as the farmer. As the Legislature had thought fit to withdraw protection from him, which protection had alone enabled him to meet the heavy demands which pressed upon him, the farmers would loudly and unanimously demand that the tax upon all other articles which came into general consumption, should be withdrawn also. He did not expect that the arrangement proposed by this Amendment would be permanent; for it seemed to him that Ministers had cut at the very root of all stability in financial measures. The Amendment of the noble Duke was certainly not what the agriculturists might desire; but they must look to the position of parties. He avowed himself anxious to maintain even a fragment of protection; and, in the hope that they would be able on a future day—since they were not permitted to do so now—to take the opinion of the country on the question, until they should have an opportunity of asking the country whether they were for protection or not. These were the grounds upon which he would support the Amendment of the noble Duke. If they could get no more, he would be perfectly ready to have a protection of 10s. a quarter. The exigencies of the country demanded it. He was as perfectly certain as he was that he stood there, that they could not cultivate the poorer soils without it. The noble Lord opposite (Lord Kinnaid) shook his head; but he had heard the noble Lord in former times say, that no land ought to be cultivated for wheat unless it could grow fifty bushels an acre. [LORD KINNAID: I said thirty-two bushels.] No land to be cultivated unless it produces thirty-two bushels an acre. Then, how are you to feed the people? Why, the average production on most inferior soils is not more than twenty bushels an acre. The county I live in is a great wheat-growing county, and sends

out more wheat than any other district; and let me tell the noble Lord that thirty-two bushels is a very large average indeed, even there. So you will displace all the labour, and throw all the land out of cultivation which does not produce thirty-two bushels an acre. What are you to do for bread? [Lord KINNAIRD: I said, thirty bushels an acre.] Oh, the noble Lord has come down a bit! But no land is to be cultivated which does not produce thirty bushels an acre. My Lords, this is very important, considering that it comes from the head of the Anti-Corn-Law League. We are to starve unless all lands produce thirty bushels an acre, or unless foreign countries feed us. Why, if the noble Lord thinks that thirty bushels an acre is the average produce of the kingdom, I must say he knows nothing about farming. [Earl STANHOPE: Kitchen garden cultivation, the noble Lord must mean.] Truly, my noble Friend is correct. The noble Lord of the thirty bushels must be speaking of the produce of the kitchen garden. But if all such land is to be taken from the productive sources of the country, they would become dependent on foreign produce to an extent that has never yet been heard of, and the price would be affected accordingly. It was a mistake to suppose that the farmers were interested in keeping up the price of bread. The cheaper the bread, the better for them; but it must be the bread of home-grown corn. Protect them—protect them, he would say; and he would answer for it, that under the system of protection, the people of England would eat cheaper bread than ever they would under the proposed measure. He would now make a few statements, to which he wished to call the attention of the House. He would take the price of bread in London from 1757 to 1817, allowing twenty-five per cent for change of currency. In 1757, the price of the quarter loaf was 8d., the same price as at present. In 1800, it was 1s. 4d.; in 1809, 11d.; in 1810, 1s. 1d.; in 1811, 1s. 1½d.; in 1812, 1s. 3d.; in 1813, 1s. 1½d.; in 1814, 9d.; in 1815, 9d.; in 1816, 1s. 1d.; in 1817, 1s. 3d. These variations, occurring as they had done, were evidently not owing to protection. There were some other points in reference to this question which had not been touched upon in that House in detail. They (the landowners) had been charged with selfishness on their part in endeavouring to retain protection; but they were the parties who in reality

would suffer least, inasmuch as they were better able to bear the loss; but what was to become of the class of men who cultivated small portions of land? In 1841, according to the returns, there were in Ireland 306,915 farms under five acres; between five and fifteen acres, 251,128; above fifteen acres, 127,166: making in all, 685,209 farms, of which 457,000 and more were under fifteen acres. The House knew the destitute condition of these people, and how much more dependent on the profitable returns of the soil they were than those who had larger possessions in land and greater incomes. There were in England, in 1812, according to property-tax returns of that year, 114,778 farms which paid rents of 66l. 13s. 4d.; above 66l. 13s. 4d., and under 200l. a year, there were 432,534. There were, therefore, under 200l. a-year of rent, no less than 546,000 farms; and the population had since that time increased seventy per cent. Were not their Lordships responsible for the safety and comfort of this large class, or should they throw them entirely out of their consideration? It was said, go on and improve, and grow more; but those who said so did not seem to know that they would come to a point when they could grow no more. Nature raised obstacles in the way. They were so dependent on the season and the storm, that in a moment the grain was laid flat and wasted. [The noble Lord here gave the results of a calculation which he had made of the loss which the present measure would entail upon the farmer.] He would take a farm of 400 acres of inferior land, paying a rent of 400l. a year. The landlord took the sixth or seventh of the produce, the farmer took the remainder. There were grown on this, 100 acres of wheat, producing 30 bushels per acre, which made 1,000l. 10s.; 100 acres of barley, 36 bushels per acre, which made 725l.; 100 acres of beans or peas, which made 720l.; other produce, 249l. 0s. 10d. The whole produce, then, amounted to 2,490l. 10s.; from which deduct the rent, and there remained 2,090l. 10s. The gross receipts after the payment of the rent, would be 2,090l.; and out of this he would have to pay all the costs of cultivation, manure, &c. Now, nobody had ventured to tell them what the price of wheat would be under the new law. Mr. Cobden had stated to the farmer, that the change would increase his profits; to the landlord, that it would increase his rent; and to the manufacturer, that it

would reduce wages. He had been the very Proteus of the day. Now, taking the prices at an 8s. duty, corn had been at 45s. a quarter on a long average. Now, he would venture to assert, that wheat would not be higher than 40s. a quarter after this Bill passed into a law, as the standard average of the price of wheat. The landlord might reduce the rent 100l. a year, and then, at this rate, the gross receipts would be 1,570l., and the tenant's loss would be, even if the landlord gave up the whole of his rent, 125l. Then, they said, this was a landlord's question. Of course, in one sense, it was a landlord's question; but the tenant would be a ruined man; the landlord who had capital, energy, and activity, would take the land into his own hands, and cultivate it himself. It had been repeatedly said that rents were rising, notwithstanding these measures; but he denied that they were so unless there were some circumstances of a peculiar nature in operation. He had had farms to let since the measure of 1842 was passed, and though put up at public auction, they had not been accepted even with the promise to pay the tithe on them. He had two of them in his own hands yet, having been unable to find tenants. The statements which he made were founded on a practical knowledge of the subject, for he spoke as a dealer in these matters; and he felt convinced that the statements on the other side proceeded from agents and interested parties. There was one important question which he was desirous to put to their Lordships, in reference to this subject, and it was this—what were they to do with the political state of the country after this Bill was passed? He did not understand how they were to carry on the Government with the sentiments and sensations that it would call into existence—how they were to carry on the Government, and maintain the Throne, with the constituencies they had in the towns, who were rather republican—he would not say disloyal—but of a very radical tendency—when the constituencies in the counties were disgusted and alienated. Could they manage them? Could they advise them, or use the legitimate influence which might guide them to wise and temperate measures? If the question of protection were raised in the country, and Parliament should again restore to them the protection they had so long enjoyed, then they might remain loyal; but if they found that it was not so, and if, at any future stage of the history of this country, they

found their means greatly diminished, he could not conceive that anything less was to be looked for than a great change in the mode by which the revenue was to be raised. The protection they had enjoyed was not only to enable them to improve the soil, but to bear the heavy burdens on real property. The amount of revenue of the land was 250,000,000l., the burdens imposed were 62,000,000l.; perhaps, if this were thought too little, he might say 80,000,000l. or 100,000,000l. Was the payment of these burdens to remain incumbent after protection was withdrawn? He said that it would be incumbent on Parliament, if protection were removed, to make all the other classes in the State take their share in bearing the burden of tithes, poor-rates, &c. Some time since he had presented a petition from the Commissioners of the Bedford Level, in which the petitioners stated, that if protection were removed, they would be unable to maintain in cultivation that district which had been reclaimed from the sea. The rents which the landlords received there were not more than 11s. an acre; and the petition stated that such moderate rents were considered satisfactory, merely because it was expected that in time the district would have a natural drainage. It was an artificial country, purely cultivated by the power of the steam-engine; it had been cultivated on the faith of the continuance of protection, and in the hope of eventual advantage from natural drainage; but with any great reduction of prices it would be impossible to keep up the cultivation. He should merely say that if the House passed this Bill, no doubt it would do so for reasons which would not injure the character of their Lordships as men of honour, desiring to do what was right, though their character as legislators, bound to protect the interests of these poorer classes, might be injured. Loss of character, in one sense, there would be in this business. A representative in Parliament becoming the servant of the Crown was, by the Constitution of this country, deemed to be so far a new man, that he must go back to the people for re-election; but where could be found a man so new as the man who had changed his opinions—who yesterday said, "Aye," and now said "No;" who to-day said, "Protection," and to-morrow, "None?" Changing their office from that of servants of the people to servants of the Crown, men must go back to the people to be re-elected; and if those who had with the people agreed that

such and such laws were to be sacred, and such and such enacted, and who had committed sacrilege upon the one, and not done the other, were not required to appeal to the people, then Parliament would find itself placed in a wrong and false position with the country.

LORD KINNAIRD agreed with his noble Friend who had last addressed the House, in deprecating the clause which held this question in suspense for three years longer. He should certainly have preferred a total and immediate repeal. His noble Friend stated that, if this measure were carried, all the farmers of the country would become free traders. He (Lord Kinnaird) should not be surprised at that; for, as a member of the Anti-Corn-Law League, he might say that the principle of universal free trade was a principle on which they had always relied. One of the dangers the noble Lord opposite had set forward with much force was the irruption of foreign grain to be expected upon the reduction of the duty. That was an assertion which apparently deserved some attention; but in effect it would be found of no importance. There was a large quantity at present in bond which could not be sold at a profit to the merchant for less than 60s. per quarter; and what was rising in the corn-growing countries, in consequence of the demand for it to be sent to Holland and other parts. He contended that the improved method of cultivation which would be introduced would more than compensate for the less price to be obtained for the grain. The subject of wages had been alluded to; the landlords were not to blame for the low rate of wages; there was no set of men in any country so anxious to promote the welfare of their labourers as the landlords in England: but then the landlords should not maintain that agriculture was in such a prosperous state that the Corn Laws might be continued. He would instance the successful competition of the Scotch agriculturists with those of England as an example of the advantage to be derived from a better education of the agriculturist, and the introduction of a better system of farming. A friend of his stated to him that two Scotch agricultural labourers were fully equal to three labourers of Hampshire or Dorsetshire; and their work, besides being equal in quantity, would be much better done. What was wanted was an altogether better system of farming, so as to make the land produce what it ought, and then the English farmer with his means and advantages could compete with all the

world: land up the Ohio produced but ten bushels an acre, and we must make our land produce twenty-eight or thirty. An experiment had been tried in Ireland on two fields, side by side; one was cultivated on the old system, and the net profit for three years was 6*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.*; the other was cultivated on an improved system, and thoroughly manured, and the profit for the same period was 23*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.* Much had been said about the ruinous effect which the repeal of the Corn Laws would have upon the value of landed property. He (Lord Kinnaird) had had the advantage of hearing the opinion of Mr. Simpson, the eminent auctioneer, a few days back; and what did their Lordships think was the effect already produced? Mr. Simpson said, that in all his long experience, he had never known estates more in demand, or more easily either let or sold. Rents were rising, and prices were firm, and to be obtained with facility. Few better or more competent authorities than that gentleman could be found, and such was his statement; and he had added that the sliding as well as other scales had fallen from his eyes. But there was another high and competent authority, whose opinion was of great weight upon the question—he meant the tenantry themselves. On an estate which he (Lord Kinnaird) would mention as an instance merely of what was taking place, a number of farms having lately fallen out of lease, the tenants, in retaking them, demanded the insertion of a clause giving them the option, in case the Corn Laws should be repealed, of giving up their holdings. The agent consented upon condition that a similar option were given to the landlord of rescinding the lease, in case the property should, after the repeal of those laws, become more valuable. The terms were agreed upon; but before the completion of the deed the tenants came voluntarily forward, and declined to have the option in either case inserted, preferring to take their chance in the ordinary manner as theretofore. He could cite several similar instances to their Lordships; but he did not wish at that late hour to trespass further upon their time. But before he sat down he wished to add a word or two with regard to what had been said of the League, of which he was a member. Many allusions had been made to that body; and it had been asserted that no such excitement existed in the towns upon the question before them, as had been represented by the

League to exist. Their Lordships would, he hoped, give them (the League) credit for having remained perfectly quiescent during the progress of the debate in both Houses. To such an extent, indeed, had they been quiet as to have given some sort of right to the noble Lord opposite to say that no excitement could be got up by them in the towns upon the subject; but he could assure the noble Lord that the League had resisted all the applications which had been made to them from all parts of the country to make a movement during the discussion, from a motive of respect to their Lordships, to the other branch of the Legislature, and to the Government which had taken the matter in hand, lest it might be said of them, in case they made a great demonstration, that their intention was to intimidate their Lordships. He was well aware that the League had been already frequently charged with an attempt to intimidate; and he was equally aware that many protectionists had asserted that their Lordships could not be intimidated; but although that had been said, yet he could assure them that the motives of the League were such as he had stated. They would not give a colour to such an assertion. They left the matter in the hands of the Government, and to the wisdom and discernment of their Lordships and the other House of Parliament; and that had been the reason for the great quiescence of that body. But if their Lordships imagined that there was any apathy abroad upon the subject, they greatly mistook the feelings of the country. The opinions of the manufacturing districts were deep and unanimous. He could speak for Scotland from personal knowledge; and he should say that if they were disappointed in their expectation that the Corn Bill would pass—if anything should occur to mar those hopes which were regarded at present as almost certainties, they would soon be heard, and in an unmistakeable voice.

House divided on Question, "That the words proposed to be left out should stand part of the Motion:"—Contents 130; Not-contents 103: Majority 33.

List of the NOT-CONTENTS.

DUKES.	MARQUESSSES.
Richmond	Salisbury
Beaufort	Downshire
Rutland	Exeter
Montrose	
Newcastle	
Buckingham	
Cleveland	
	EARLS.
	Huntingdon
	Winchelsea

Chesterfield
Sandwich
Abingdon
Eglington
Kinnoull
Airlie
Selkirk
Orkney
Oxford
Dartmouth
Aylesford
Stanhope
Pomfret
Ashburnham
Warwick
Hardwick
Hechester
Delawarr
Mansfield
Carnarvon
Cadogan
Malmesbury
Egmont
Shannon
Enniskillen
Roden
Mountcashel
Wicklow
Lucan
Erne
Limerick
Clancarty
Onslow
Nelson
Charleville
Oxford
Lonsdale
Harewood
Bradford
Beauchamp
Sheffield
Eldon
Falmouth
Somers
Stradbroke
Munster
Ranfurly

VISCOUNTS.

Hereford
Gage
Doneraile
St. Vincent
Sidmouth
Lorton
Lako
Exmouth
Combermere
Ponsonby
Hill

BISHOPS.

Glocester
Exeter

LOARDS.

Stanley
De Ros
Hastings
Clinton
Willoughby d'Eresby
Beaumont
Vaux
St. John
Sinclair
Saltoun
Polwarth
Middleton
Soudes
Boston
Hawke
Walsingham
Southampton
Berwick
Bayning
Bolton
Northwick
Clonbrock
Redesdale
Colechester
Faversham
Skelmersdale
Wynford
Templemore
Abinger
Ashburton
De Freyne

Paired off.

Duke of Marlborough	Earl Howe
Duke of Portland	Archbp. of Canterbury
Duke of Manchester	Marquess of Winchester
Marquess of Thomond	Duke of Devonshire
Marquess of Ely	Marquess of Ormonde
Marquess of Westminster	Duke of Sutherland
Earl of Cardigan	Earl of Besborough
Earl of Lauderdale	Viscount Melville
Earl Ferrers	Earl of Romney
Earl of Tankerville	Lord Saye and Sele
Earl Waldegrave	Earl of Meath
Earl of Guilford	Lord Prudhoe
Earl Digby	Duke of Somerset
Earl of Beverley	Duke of Bedford
Earl of Longford	Earl of Westmoreland
Earl Browlow	Marq. of Londonderry
Viscount Arbuthnot	Lord Abercromby
Viscount Strangford	Earl of Camperdown
Viscount Doneraile	Duke of Roxburgh
Viscount O'Neill	Viscount Massareene
Viscount Beresford	Earl of Clare
Viscount Canterbury	Lord Foley
Bishop of Winchester	Bishop of Lichfield
Bishop of Bangor	Bishop of Chester

Bishop of Landaff	Lord Bexley
Bishop of Bath and Wells	Bishop of Norwich
Ed. Willoughby de Broke	Earl Amherst
Lord Colville	Lord Downes
Lord Reay	Bishop of Durham
Lord Dynevor	Earl of Essex
Lord Bagot	Earl of Stair
Lord Sherborne	Lord Strafford
Lord Braybrooke	Lord Colborne
Lord Lilford	Earl of Sefton
Lord Farnham	Lord Talbot of Malahide
Lord Crofton	Marquess of Anglesey
Lord Alvanley	Lord Dunfermline
Lord Ravensworth	Lord Stourton
Lord Rayleigh	Lord Rolle

House resumed.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Tuesday, June 16, 1846.

THE CORN IMPORTATION BILL.

EARL STANHOPE said, that before their Lordships went into Committee again upon the Corn Importation Bill, he wished to put a question to his noble Friend the President of the Board of Control. He was anxious to learn from his noble Friend whether he expected that the effect of their Corn Bill would be to raise the prices of corn, to leave them where they were, or to depress them?

The EARL OF RIPON replied, that the question which the noble Earl had just put to him, was one which, if he mistook not, had already been put to his noble Friend the President of the Board of Trade in the course of the debates upon that measure. His noble Friend had given an answer to that question; and to that answer he (the Earl of Ripon) was also disposed to adhere, viz., that it was not possible for any man to give such an answer to such a question as should be satisfactory. The seasons would, he apprehended, operate upon prices under this Bill just as they had under former Bills relating to the same subject; and, looking at the prices at which corn had ranged under former Corn Bills, he saw there had been nothing but extreme fluctuations in them. He could not help thinking, however, that if any of those who had recommended those Bills to the adoption of Parliament had been called upon at the time to state what would be the prices of corn under their measures, no answer would or could have been given to such questions; or if they had been, the

statements of those who gave them would have been falsified by the results. He would not himself, therefore, undertake, any more than they had done in regard to their measures, to prophesy with respect to what would be the prices of corn under this Bill.

EARL STANHOPE said, he did not ask the Government to say what would be the price in any one year—all he wished to know was, what would be the price on an average of any number of years—whether the price of corn, in short, would be higher or lower under the operation of this Bill. Not having had an answer to his question, he would only say that it was apparent to their Lordships, and it ought to be made known to the country, that Her Majesty's Government were bringing this measure forward without any knowledge of the question whatever.

The EARL OF WINCHILSEA must say, that he considered the answer which the noble Earl had given to his noble Friend to be most unsatisfactory.

The DUKE OF RICHMOND said, that if the noble Earl the President of the Board of Control would not answer the question which had been put to him by his noble Friend, he (the Duke of Richmond) would answer it for him. If their Lordships would turn to a despatch which had lately been written by Mr. Secretary Gladstone to the Governor General of Canada, they would find that Mr. Gladstone stated that, whilst he did not presume to anticipate what were likely to be the precise limits of the ruling prices of corn after this Bill should have passed, yet that the most competent persons did not think that there would be any reduction below what had been the prices of the last three years, 1843, 1844, and 1845. Now, this was the opinion of a Member of Parliament, and a Cabinet Minister, upon this question of price; and he could not but think that this despatch must have some weight with their Lordships, and the more so from the publicity which had been given to the document, for it was not often in this country that a Secretary of State wrote a despatch to the Governor of a Colony, and then published it in a newspaper before the Governor could have seen it. And, my Lords (said the noble Duke), if I was the Governor General of Canada, I should feel somewhat indignant in reading my instructions for the first time in a public paper.

EARL STANHOPE again rose, and said he must beg to be allowed to ask another

question of the noble Earl (Earl Ripon). He wished to be informed whether the intention of the Government was by this Bill to raise prices, to lower them, or to leave them where they were? The noble Earl need not surely be under the necessity of going into any very abstruse calculation in order to answer a question so simple as that, as it was merely what the Government intended that he wished to be informed of. If the great autocrat of the Government would condescend to communicate to the Cabinet what was his intention as to prices under this measure, or if he had communicated it, he did trust that the noble Earl would tell them what it was.

The EARL OF RIPON said, the question of the noble Earl appeared to him to be pretty much the same as his former one, and he could, therefore, give him no other answer than he had already given.

EARL STANHOPE retorted, that they could only judge of the intentions of the Government from their suspicious silence.

The EARL OF RIPON observed, that he objected to the noble Earl using such words as "suspicious silence." What right had the noble Earl to term their silence "suspicious?" He (Lord Ripon) acted from a sense of his duty, and he would not submit to imputations of this kind.

EARL STANHOPE said, that he had not meant to say anything offensive to the noble Earl; but he must say, that when silence was observed by the Government on a subject of such importance, it did cause a suspicion in the country as to their motives and intentions; and it was in that sense, and in that sense only, that he used the words which had been complained of.

EARL GREY said, that though the Government, in the exercise of their discretion, had thought proper not to answer the question which had been put to them with respect to their intention in regard to the range of prices under this Bill, he hoped he (Earl Grey) might be permitted, as a humble supporter of the measure, to state his own views as to what was the object of it in that respect. He apprehended that the object of this measure was, not to secure 80s. a quarter for wheat, as was the professed object of the Bill of 1815—not 60s., as was calculated upon by the promoters of the measure of 1828—not to obtain 55s., as was expected under the Bill of 1842—but to secure to the country a sufficiency of corn at a natural price, be that price what it might.

VOL. II.

The EARL OF STRADBROKE said, he had merely risen to protest against what the noble Earl (Earl Grey) on the Opposition benches had stated to have been the professed object of the existing Corn Law, and of the previous Acts. The intention of those measures had not been, as the noble Earl had stated, to secure 80s. in 1815, or 60s. in 1828, or 55s. in 1842, but only to protect the agriculturist of this country against foreign competition.

The EARL OF RIPON here moved the Order of the Day; and House in Committee accordingly.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL—COMMITTEE. —FOURTH NIGHT.

Clause 1 being proposed, enacting—

"That, in lieu of the present Duties on Corn imported into the United Kingdom, and entered for home consumption, there be levied until the 1st of February, 1849, the Duties set forth in the Schedule, and after February 1, 1849, 'upon all wheat, barley, bear or higgs, oats, rye, peas, and beans, 1s. for every quarter'—"

The EARL OF WICKLOW moved, that the words following the word "wheat" be left out, and these words inserted in lieu thereof, "not being the produce of the Colonies of the United Kingdom, 5s. for every quarter." The noble Earl said, that if their Lordships should give their sanction to his proposition in regard to wheat, he should afterwards move Amendments, in like proportions, in the duties proposed in respect of the other sorts of grain named in the Bill. He could assure their Lordships, that it was not with any satisfaction to himself that he had undertaken this duty; and if it was objected to him that he had not given any formal notice of his intention to move this Amendment, he could only say that one of his chief reasons for not having done so was this—that he had hoped, until the last moment, that some one of the noble Lords opposite, to whom, he must observe, an Amendment of this nature more consistently belonged, would have brought this proposition forward. Feeling that the Amendment would improve the Bill, he had taken upon himself the not very agreeable task of originating it himself. The question had been so thoroughly discussed on its general principles, that he would confine himself, as far as possible, to the particular subject of his Amendment. His noble Friend at the Table had put some very pertinent questions to the Government in regard to the effect of this measure, which might have

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been answered, and he thought ought to have been answered. Almost every noble Lord who had spoken had ventured an opinion upon that matter. Some noble Lords had stated that their opinion decidedly was, that the price of corn would fall; and they had urged that as a strong reason for supporting the Bill. Others had thought that its effect would be not to lower the price of corn, but to produce steadiness, and prevent fluctuation; and the noble Earl opposite (Earl of Clarendon) might be considered the representative of the first class. That noble Earl thought that the price would fall, and he had illustrated the consequences of that, by saying that if it fell from 50s. to 40s., it would cause a saving of 12,000,000*l.* to the wheat consumers of this country; but the noble Earl did not seem to consider to what extent that argument might be pushed. He seemed to forget that that 12,000,000*l.*, though gained to the consumer, would be lost to the country. If that amount were to be transferred from the consumers of wheat to the producers in this country—the country would sustain no loss; but if, under reduced prices to be caused by this Bill, there should be a transfer from the consumers of wheat to the producers of foreign countries, then that which was saved to the consumers of wheat would be lost to the country.

THE EARL OF CLARENDON said, he had not stated it as his opinion that the price of corn would fall, but that if it did fall, such and such consequences would follow.

THE EARL OF WICKLOW was bound to accept the explanation of the noble Earl; but no doubt many of their Lordships had advocated this Bill on that ground; and it was a very rational ground for so doing—indeed the whole argument of “cheap bread” depended upon it. But he wished now rather to take the argument of those who said that this measure would remove the fluctuations of the sliding scale; and as to that, his opinion was, that the effect of a sliding scale would be to equalize prices, if it were formed on a right foundation, and that the present sliding scale had failed, as it certainly had, from a defect in the machinery by which it was carried into operation. Upon the whole, however, considering the circumstances of this country, he thought that a fixed duty was the best. He had stated that opinion several years ago; but then both parties were united in thinking that protection to the

farmer was the main object, and he yielded to the general impression. If, then, the great object were to prevent fluctuations, he need not produce any arguments to show that his Amendment could not have the effect of making the price variable, for the fluctuations must be precisely the same without this duty as with it; and that he put forward as a strong and invincible argument in favour of it, because, whilst the public lost nothing, and the consumer lost nothing, the public revenue would be the gainer; and he could see no conceivable reason in the subject itself, why the Government should needlessly throw away so large an amount of revenue. But even supposing that his proposition should have the effect of raising the average price of wheat to the extent of the additional duty, if the greater object of preventing fluctuation were attained, could any evil consequences result? None. As regarded the working classes, the farmers, and the revenue of the State, and as regarded also the landed proprietors of the country, that small addition of price would be advantageous rather than prejudicial. The fixity of price being attained, surely the working classes could not suffer from this alternation. There had been much discussion on what regulated the rate of wages; and he admitted that the fluctuating price of corn did not regulate the rate of wages; but that many other things entered into the consideration; but, *ceteris paribus*, in the long run the fixed price of corn must affect the rate of wages; and, therefore, to the labourer it would not matter if the price were slightly raised, because, in the long run, his wages must rise in proportion. Then, as to the farmer; with his fixed charges on the land, the poor and other rates, he must be benefited by the change. As to the revenue derivable from this source in the run of years, it would amount to not less than 1,000,000*l.* sterling; and when noble Lords opposite came into office, as soon they must, and proposed and carried those alterations in the sugar duties, in which he thought they were right, and from which they expected a large accession of revenue, with these means they might reduce at least one-half of the income tax. He could not help remarking how studiously noble Lords had avoided all reference to the landed interest in this debate; the reason was clear—they were anxious to avoid all possibility even of suspicion of interested motives; but, in taking that course, they had done, he

thought, an injustice to a most useful and necessary class of the community. They might talk of the great advantage of pushing their commerce to the ends of the world, and of the blessings of free trade; but the best, the surest, and the greatest market for the manufacturing industry of the country was that called the home market, which the landed interest afforded. There had, however, been some allusion to the landed interest, and it came from a quarter from which he should least have expected it. The right rev. Prelate who had introduced that matter, had shown, at all events, that if oratorical powers were a qualification for that Bench, no man deserved it better than himself. But he (Lord Wicklow) was surprised to hear with what complacency the right rev. Prelate, recently elevated to honours and rank, seemed to contemplate a change by which the landed interest would be ousted from their property. The right rev. Prelate had stated, that when he visited his diocese he had found the habitations of the poor in a miserable condition; and that the rectors had told him that it arose from the poverty of the landlord; and then the right rev. Prelate rejoiced that the result of this measure would be such a change of property as would remove such incompetent possessors of property. Now, he had endeavoured to conceive what sort of man that landlord might be. He had conceived him a person who, from a long line of ancestors, had inherited this property; and who, relying upon the faith of the protection which the Legislature had given, had attempted to make charges upon his land for family purposes; and he believed that the transfer of property from such hands would be attended with indelible injury to the whole country. He had endeavoured to turn over in his mind the objections which could be urged to his Amendment, and the first argument which suggested itself, taking the form of a question, was this—"Will you tax the food of the people?" But the answer which would naturally be given to the question was, if it were wrong to tax the food of the people, why was it that they taxed every necessary of life, and all food, except corn?—why should they leave corn the only untaxed article of consumption? Sugar was as much a necessary of life as wheat; indeed, if they took the whole Empire, including Scotland and Ireland, it was more so—and yet they taxed sugar. Now, his noble and learned Friend had

stated that there was a broad distinction between duties imposed for revenue, and duties imposed for protection. That, where a duty was imposed equally upon all, it became revenue; but where it was confined to one article, it was protection: now, without quarrelling with that definition, he did not see that it had much to do with the argument. He wanted a duty for revenue, and he did not want it the less because others considered that it would operate as a protection. If laid on, it operated both as revenue and protection; and whenever they might be able to dispense with their Customs altogether, and to get commerce perfectly free, he would willingly give up the duty on corn; but all political economists agreed that customs duties were the best mode of taxation, and it was clear that they must exist as long as this country existed. He therefore said, that it was due to the farming interest of the country to continue protection, though for the purposes of revenue. And here he must say, that he could not understand why the noble Lords on the Opposition side should now turn round upon this subject, except for the sake of imitating the example of those who sat opposite to them—and discard all their former opinions. But he thought they might suspect a reason which the noble Lords would not avow; indeed he believed that if that most impolitic and imprudent letter which had been written by a noble Lord at the end of last year, evidently intended to embarrass a Government, and not written with any notion of the consequences that would follow; he believed that, but for that imprudent and most unfortunate letter, those noble Lords opposite would now be sitting on that side of the House, with the opportunity of proposing their own measure, and satisfying and gratifying the country. He knew, of course, that the effect of carrying his Amendment must, at present, be to defeat the Bill; but he was most anxious so to do—for this reason, that they might get a better and more serviceable Bill. He did not want any sliding scale—he did not think a sliding scale applicable to the circumstances of this country—but he was anxious to set this vexatious question at rest; and he was convinced that it was impossible to do so by this present Bill. Those who expected that, were, in his opinion, as ignorant of the state of feeling in the agricultural population as they were ignorant of what was passing in another hemisphere; and

he believed, that if they succumbed to the power of the Anti-Corn-Law League, the agitation which that body had excited would be but a slight whisper, in comparison with the roaring tempest which they were raising about their ears. The agricultural population of this country were far too proud and independent to suffer themselves to be trodden upon in this manner; they would be ready enough to sacrifice their own interests, if others were called upon to make the same sacrifice; but when they saw a new principle applied to them, and to them alone, they would never be satisfied with it; and therefore, he was anxious to give to the noble Lords opposite an opportunity of ingratiating themselves with the country. If noble Lords opposite came into office, and introduced such a Bill as he proposed, they would give satisfaction to the country; and if that was the case, what signified a little delay? He asked whether it was not well known that every man in that House, except a few leaders, in their consciences preferred such a measure; and was it creditable then to that House to be influenced by other considerations? He believed that the rejection of the Bill for the purpose of an Amendment of this sort, would give satisfaction to the agricultural population, and no dissatisfaction to manufacturers, who were divided on the effect of the measure. In his Amendment he had, however, excepted the corn of our own Colonies; and he begged to ask, was it not desirable at present to satisfy Canada? Let them look to the state of affairs in that part of the world, would any one say that the war now raging between America and Mexico would not be attended with serious consequences? If successful, the Americans would only be more proud, and more inclined to dictate unreasonable terms to this country; and if unsuccessful, which was not likely, they would then seek some other ground for the display of their energies and valour. Certainly, to take the present moment for any step which would be disagreeable to Canada, would be most unwise. Upon all these grounds, therefore, he begged to move—

"That instead of 1s., there be a duty of 5s. on wheat imported after the 1st of February, 1849."

THE MARQUESS OF CLANRICARDE said, that his opinions upon the general subject of the debate being known, he should not have troubled their Lordships if it had not been for the reference made by the noble

Earl to the noble Lords on the Opposition side; and as he (the Marquess of Clanricarde) was old-fashioned enough to desire to be consistent, he would show to their Lordships that in supporting this measure he was acting in perfect consistency with his former conduct. He would remind their Lordships, that in 1841, when he seconded the Address moved by his lamented friend Lord Speneer, the debate turned on whether a moderate fixed duty should be substituted for the then existing protection to agriculture. In that debate both himself and the noble Earl expressed their opinion that it was desirable that the protection to agriculture should be reduced as speedily and as safely as possible: consequently, it was clear his opinion had undergone no change; and the noble Earl who had now introduced this Bill, and who upon the occasion he referred to had moved the Amendment to the Address, drew particular attention to their remarks, and said that their object was clearly free trade. In explanation, he had stated that he wished certainly to come gradually to the abolition of all protective duties, because he did not agree with his noble Friend (Lord Speneer) in thinking that they could at that time be safely repealed at once. Now as regarded the Amendment of the noble Earl, he was of opinion that it would fail in its object—it would be not even a remnant of protection for the country. He (the Marquess of Clanricarde) was not one of those who thought that in all cases where it was expedient the abolition of a duty should take place, the sooner it was accomplished the better, because, no doubt, as much discretion was necessary in fixing an appropriate period for a change, as to decide upon the change itself. He (the Marquess of Clanricarde) considered that in all such cases regard should be paid to the general feeling of the country, and that all measures which might have a tendency to produce what was called a panic should be avoided; and he believed that if at the time to which he referred, the Government had proposed a measure for the total abolition of all protective duties, an agitation and panic would have been produced seriously injurious to the commercial as well as to the agricultural interests. It was notorious that it would have been absurd at that period to have made such a proposition, which could not have been successful. But within the last three years, not only the Ministers, but the people of this country, had acquired a degree of knowledge on this subject which they did

not previously possess, and a very different feeling had been excited with regard to this question. He wished to refer to one point on which the noble Earl opposite (the Earl of Wicklow) had touched, namely, the effect this Bill might be expected to produce upon the price of corn. He did not wonder that noble Lords on the Treasury benches hesitated to give an answer to the question which had been put to them as to the price corn might hereafter be expected to bear, though he did not think they had a right entirely to withhold some expression of their opinion thereupon. He (the Marquess of Clanricarde), as one of those who supported the abolition of protection, at once avowed that he advocated a certain degree of diminution of price. Under the operation of this measure, prices on the Continent would undoubtedly be raised, and prices in this country would be lowered, but not to such an extent as essentially to injure the landed interests of this kingdom; for he was convinced that the farmers of this country were able to compete with any agriculturists with whom they could be brought into competition. Their Lordships had heard many complaints of the burdens to which land was subjected; but they must remember the advantages concomitant with those burdens. It was said that compensation would be given to the farmers by measures yet to be brought under the consideration of their Lordships. Now he wished to guard against the supposition that he grounded his support of the measure upon any plan of compensation, or that he thought any compensation necessary; but, he must say that he could not regard the measures which had been brought forward by the Government professedly for the relief of the agriculturists, with reference to the expense of highways and prosecutions, as measures which would compensate the farmers for the effects of this Bill. He supported those measures upon their own merits. But when noble Lords complained that the landowners and farmers were subjected to heavy expenses for the maintenance of high roads, he must call upon them to remember the advantage they derived from such communications. He could remember the time when there were only two main roads in Leicestershire, and when the by-roads in that county were almost impassable by any vehicles; but now the face of the country was entirely changed: there was scarcely a farm to which there was not access by good roads, and the farmers had been more than

compensated for the expense of those improvements by the advantages they had derived. The agriculturists also complained of the expense to which they were subjected for the maintenance and removal of the labouring poor who flocked from distant districts, or came over from Ireland, to reap the harvest. But did the farmers consider what an advantage it was to them to have a nation at their beck upon whom they could rely for an abundant supply of labour? There was no doubt that, without such assistance, it would be impossible to get in the harvests of this country. A noble Lord opposite had argued that our farmers could not successfully compete with foreign corn producers, who were not liable to a taxation of more than 1*d.* and 2*d.* an acre; but noble Lords must remember the state of the land in the countries to which the noble Lord referred, that they had no roads or rivers, or any of the appliances possessed by our agriculturists. These burdens so much complained of were in his opinion accompanied by great advantages, and therefore no compensation was needed with respect to them. The noble Marquess then alluded to the fixed taxes of the country for the payment of the army and navy, the public debt, and other permanent charges of the State, and contended that if, as was asserted, the operation of the Bill would be to improve the state of the country generally, the power of the nation to sustain those charges would be increased; and those who argued to the contrary were obliged to beg the question by saying, the price of corn, and other prices in proportion, being lowered, the resources of the country would be impaired by such cheapness, which was another word for abundance. The value of land, it had also been stated, would be reduced. How could that happen? The population being expansive, and the land not, the value of land and its produce must, by necessity, increase, as the numbers and wealth of the population increased. The noble Earl (Earl of Wicklow) called upon them to support his proposition for the sake of revenue; and he said that this was a legitimate source from which to derive revenue. To this doctrine abstractedly he had no objection. If they taxed other necessities of life, they might, on the same principle, tax bread. Taxing iron, wood, or any necessary material for producing bread, was, in fact, just as much a bread tax as if it were levied directly on the import of corn. Holding these views, he did not see that a small duty

on corn for the purposes of revenue would be necessarily objectionable. He considered that a small duty, say 5*s.* or 4*s.*, which he would have preferred, would have yielded a considerable revenue, while it would not have pressed heavily upon the consumer. Supposing the consumption of this country to be 20,000,000 of quarters annually, 16,000,000 of which were home grown, and the remaining 4,000,000 imported at a 5*s.* duty, the tax upon the consumer falling upon the whole 20,000,000, would amount but to the shadow of a tax. He (the Marquess of Clanricarde) must say he was astonished that no allusion had been made to the extraordinary disproportion there was in this country between the price of bread and the price of corn. That was a point on which he had frequently sought, but had never been able to obtain, a satisfactory explanation. He considered that the imposition of a low duty upon corn, for the sake of revenue, might have been a wise measure on the part of Her Majesty's Government; but he wished to remind their Lordships that when he had advocated a low fixed duty, as a means of revenue, he had done so specially with a view to avoid the imposition of the income tax. The noble Earl opposite (Earl of Wicklow), however, could not expect him to assist in throwing out this Bill, which would effect an object he had always advocated, the abolition of protection, in order that a new Government might possibly be formed which might eventually relieve the country from the income tax. He did not think Parliament would now be ready to vote a tax upon corn into the Exchequer, on the supposition that the Minister, when he obtained it, would give up the income tax. He had regarded the income tax as an injudicious measure; but he must confess the country did not appear at the present moment nearly so impatient under that tax as it might have been supposed they would have been: he (the Marquess of Clanricarde) was not, however, on that account, disposed to rely on the income tax as a permanent source of revenue. Since the imposition of that tax they had been blessed with good harvests and great prosperity; and those who had observed the course of popular feeling would admit, that when people were in a state of prosperity they were not much disposed to complain of taxation; but it generally happened that at the moment when the Government most needed their resources they were pressed for a diminution of taxation; and there-

fore he thought it unsafe to rely too much upon direct taxation. But how did the noble Earl propose to carry out his views? He said, "Throw out this Bill, then there will be a dissolution and a change of Government." Now, he (the Marquess of Clanricarde) was not quite certain that these consequences would follow such a course. [The Earl of Wicklow observed that he had not said a word on the subject of a dissolution; he had only alluded to a change of Government.] He (the Marquess of Clanricarde) must ask their Lordships to recollect the present position of this question, and the opinion which had been expressed by Parliament upon it. The Bill had been brought up by an immense majority from the other House. The second reading had been sanctioned by their Lordships by a very considerable majority; and yesterday, in Committee, the main provision of the Bill had also been sanctioned by a large majority. Did the noble Earl think, then, that the existing Parliament could very consistently adopt his proposition for a fixed duty, and carry out his scheme of finance? He could not conceive why the sliding scale should be preserved for three years. The farmers in the country with whom he had had some opportunities of conferring were quite unanimous in not attaching any importance to a continuance of the sliding scale during the next three years, although they disagreed about most of the other details of this measure. He objected to it because it would be to continue a degree of agitation and panic. Sir R. Peel had at first put the Bill on the allegation of the famine in Ireland; but he had since shifted his ground. He (the Marquess of Clanricarde) was bound to admit, that although the famine was local, yet in some counties it amounted to starvation. But the Government were not so absurd as to rely for the relief of famine upon this Bill. They had taken admirable measures on that subject; and he was ready to pay his most willing testimony to their judgment and activity. But when Sir Robert Peel was spoken of as the greatest Minister of the day—good God! was the man entitled to that praise who had been all his life pursuing a course which he now admitted to be contrary to judgment and to sound policy? Then they were told how honest it was of the Ministry to avow a change in their opinions; as if there was anything extraordinary in the quality of honesty. They were told also

that Sir Robert Peel had sacrificed a great party by bringing in this Bill; but he could not see that the right hon. Baronet had intended for one moment to relinquish office and power. Sir Robert Peel had never said that, and he did not believe it. For there was little doubt, that if the noble Lord (Lord Stanley) had joined Sir Robert Peel in his first attempt to settle this question, the right hon. Baronet would have been in power now, and not only at the head of the Government, but at the head of a strong party. He (the Marquess of Clanricarde) could not think him a man of foresight. He could not forget that every party he had conducted, he had led to a defeat. Some of his followers died fighting, as it were, in the last ditch; but the right hon. Baronet always surrendered in time and at discretion. Every one of Sir Robert Peel's changes had been with the current of the moment; and a single instance could not be found on record in which he had changed his opinion in the House of Commons, and had been beaten upon that question. He (the Marquess of Clanricarde) had considered the present measure without any bias in its favour; and the result of a fair consideration of the question was, that he was obliged to say "Not content" to the present Amendment.

The EARL OF CARNARVON was understood to say, that there ran through the speech of the noble Lord who had just sat down a fallacy which had been rebutted when it was said to have appeared on this side—the fallacy which was termed begging the question—of assuming that steadiness of price would be attained by what was called free trade, and that if the country prospered under these measures, the landed interest was sure to partake of that prosperity. But that was the very point at issue. If the home market were seriously injured by the importation of foreign corn, he believed that the manufacturers themselves would be injured, much more the agriculturists. Then there was another question, whether the manufacturing operatives would be benefited by cheapness of price. He knew that some of the manufacturers argued that the wages of their workmen could not be lowered under the present restrictive system of supply; but that if the Corn Laws were abolished, they would be able to pay their operatives smaller wages. Now he did not state this as an attack on the manufacturers—he believed that they were pressed by competition on every hand—but still it was an in-

dication of what the working poor might expect. It appeared to him, that so far as the interests of the poor man were concerned, their Lordships would take a short-sighted view of the question in looking merely at the repeal of the Corn Laws. They must take other considerations into account. He feared that by cheapening the price of corn they would throw land out of cultivation; that this would have the effect of diminishing employment; and he was afraid that in this way the poor would lose, on the one hand, more than they gained on the other. And again, so far as the agricultural labourer was concerned, he was sure that any diminution of the profit of the farmer would infallibly react upon the wages of the labourer. In arguing in this way, he must not be supposed to think that cheapness was in itself an evil, or even that it was injurious to the farmer; on the contrary, he might state that an eminent agriculturist had admitted to him, that in one year of extremely low prices he had made greater profit than in any year, either before or since, the abundance in quantity having made up for the cheapness of price. He, therefore, agreed with the late Mr. Huskisson, that he did not care how cheap wheat was, so long as it was the result of our domestic produce; but if there should be an abundant produce throughout Europe at the time of unrestricted importation, there would then be a fearful fall in prices; then would come upon the farmers of this country distress which his heart bled to think of—upon the lesser tenant-farmers, indeed, utter shipwreck; and he would remind their Lordships, that if they wished to be respected, they must look with an eye of respect upon the interests of little men as much as upon the interests of the greatest man in their Lordships' House. He could not help still hoping that noble Lords on the other side of the House would not feel the difficulties of their position to be so great but that they might be able to support this Amendment. From some of those noble Lords he had heard strong and eloquent arguments in favour of a fixed duty. If those arguments were good then, why were they not good now? He could not conceive any advantages which his noble Friends then attached to a fixed duty, which did not still attach to it. And there was one difficulty which a fixed duty would help to get over, that the Bill as it stood left where it was—he meant the necessity of doing even-handed justice as be-

tween the agriculturist and the manufacturer. Why should the farmer be obliged to sell his corn at free-trade prices, and then be obliged to buy articles of clothing at protection prices? That was an anomaly which he knew some noble Lords opposite wished to remedy as well as himself; and the only remedy that could now be proposed would be to place a duty on corn to counterbalance the duty that was now placed on manufactures. Then, was it wise to sacrifice such a large amount of revenue as a fixed duty would produce? That would be a serious loss at all times, but it might very soon be felt to be especially serious, as they might expect a period of reaction after the long course of prosperity they had enjoyed. Then it was said, if this Amendment were carried, the forms of Parliament were such, that the result would be the failure of this measure as a distinct Bill. Be it so; but then why could not another Bill be brought in, more in accordance with their Lordships' opinions? Why should it be supposed that there was any disrespect to the other House involved in this course? Surely there was much more disrespect evinced to their Lordships in urging on this Bill, in opposition, as it had been said, not to the votes, but to the opinions of their Lordships. No doubt this course would involve delay; but was the question of delay to be compared, for one moment, with the incalculable risk of rash and ill-considered legislation? Surely they must agree with him, that legislation on the gravest subject which could occupy the attention of their Lordships ought to be the very best which the wisdom of Parliament could devise. But it was argued next, that a fixed duty could not be maintained in years of scarcity. It was very true that it could not be maintained, if clamour and not a sense of public interest were to be the guides of their policy; but as it was generally admitted now that the remission of a duty in years of scarcity benefited the importer only, and not the consumer, he did not see why it should not be maintained; and if Government could be induced to adopt the principle of a fixed duty, he did not think there was much danger of a proposition being made which the practical good sense of the country considered to be entirely useless as a measure of relief. If they did pass this measure, why what did they do? They proposed to compel the farmer to sell his corn at free-trade prices, and to purchase his

clothing at protection prices. Was this fair? Was it not calculated to rouse in the breast of the agriculturist not merely a sense of harsh treatment, but of positive injustice? Was it not sowing the seeds of discontent between different classes of the community, and widening the breach between the agriculturists and the manufacturers, instead of cementing those interests, which a more skilful policy would effect? With respect to Ireland, it seemed now to be admitted that the fears of famine had been exaggerated. He did not blame the Ministers for that; but there was one thing connected with it, on which his heart misgave him. The prospect of a famine in Ireland had been urged by the First Minister of the Crown, as a reason for bringing forward this measure; but he had failed to show that the famine existed to such an extent as to require the repeal of the Corn Laws. It was impossible, indeed, not to rejoice that the famine had, in a great measure, passed away; but he (Lord Carnarvon) could not but feel, that if the right hon. Gentleman had been utterly mistaken in the extent of the infliction and the nature of the required remedy, he might be equally incorrect as to his anticipations of the beneficial effects which would result from this measure. If that were to happen, what would be their Lordships' feelings, when they saw the state to which they had reduced the country? For themselves, he believed that their Lordships might get on with diminished incomes; and, indeed, it would be right that their incomes should be reduced, if all other classes were suffering around them; but he grieved for those agriculturists, many of them men of small capital, whose now happy homes would be rendered desolate by this measure; he grieved for the peasant population of England, whose labour would be, to a great extent, displaced by foreign labour; and he grieved for the effects upon the country at large, for he believed that this measure would affect, directly or indirectly, every interest in the kingdom—not that of a single class merely, but those of the whole nation. As to the idea that they should pass this measure in deference to the feelings of the First Minister of the Crown, he hoped it would not be entertained for a moment by their Lordships. If the fiat of any Minister, however powerful, were to be allowed to stifle and overbear the genuine expression of the feelings of that House, it would not only put an end to the Consti-

tution which they had so long had the happiness to live under, of King, Lords, and Commons, but it would be the introduction of the worst kind of despotism, because carried out under the forms of constitutional law and the semblance of perfect liberty. Say what they might, he believed that nine-tenths of those whom he had then the honour to address, were unfriendly at heart to the withdrawal of the principle of protection, and therefore they ought to reject this measure, irrespective of the feelings of any individual. He could easily understand how in the second reading of the Bill many of them might have felt indisposed to reject what, in their opinion, seemed to affirm the essential principle of free trade; but would they submit as Peers to be told that they must not now interfere with the detail—that they were not, except at their peril, to modify or improve a single clause—that they dared not annex, as a condition to the Bill, that fixed duty which those to whom the noble Lords opposite had been accustomed to look up as leaders in legislation, both political and commercial, had for years been pressing upon them? If this were to be the case—if in all cases they were to allow “I dare not wait upon I would”—if they were always to remain in leading-strings, then he must say, that instead of the reality, they had only the playwork of legislation, and that though they might amuse their mornings with railway legislation, yet, for all the great questions of national policy, the House of Lords was dead. There was another reason why he recommended a fixed duty. He had heard several speeches directed to prove the impolicy of their dissolving Parliament on the question of the Corn Laws, and of the danger of arraying class against class on the subject. Now he said, that by refusing this Amendment, they were running the risk of the very thing they were afraid of. At the approach of the next general election they would find the principle of protection still in existence, though sentence of death would have been passed upon it; and could they doubt that the farmers, treated as they had been, would not rise in every country town, village, and hamlet through the Empire—and take the question into their own hands, resolving that they would not again be betrayed by their representatives, and that they would not give up the fragment of protection which yet remained to them? Well, then, were they not much more likely now to settle

the question on a stable foundation by adopting a fixed duty? But it was said the tenant-farmers had become indifferent to this question. Those who said so little knew the temper or the metal of the men they spoke of. Many of their Lordships must have seen the burst of agricultural feeling which took place at the time when the protection societies were established—established not by the landed proprietors, but by the tenant-farmers, who rose almost literally as one man on this occasion. If they did not wish to array the agricultural against the manufacturing classes—if they did not wish to fill the kingdom with strife and bitterness, which would find ample vent at an approaching election, then he called upon their Lordships to accept the Amendment of his noble Friend. He called upon noble Lords opposite to support the Amendment, which was, indeed, in a manner, a creature of their own creation—he implored the House to accept it, not merely for its intrinsic value, but as indicative of a disposition in their Lordships friendly to the agricultural interests, with which most of them were so intimately connected. Let them not trample under foot that valuable and industrious class which had been so long cherished and respected; let them rather pour balm into those wounds which were of so grievous a nature, and which had been in a manner so unexpected and so severe.

LORD DE MAULEY had voted for the measure, because he disapproved of the present Corn Law. But to repeal all duty upon corn without the substitution of any other, appeared to him to be so material an alteration in the financial state of the country, and of so much consequence as regarded Ireland, whose only market for corn, her chief produce, was this country, that he must support the Amendment of the noble Earl. He was of opinion that the House should embrace any measure which afforded more time for consideration. He thought that was the sounder and the safer policy. Even so low a fixed duty as that proposed by the noble Earl would assist the revenue, and would enable the Government to repeal taxes which pressed more heavily than this one on the great bulk of the community. It would also afford some slight protection to the landed interest, though he was free to admit it would operate more as a duty of finance than any great favour towards the landed interest, to which, however, it might be prudent to make some slight concession. The con-

cession, as regarded the popular party, would be small indeed; but yet, by the agriculturists, it would be regarded as an evidence of kindly feeling. If Sir Robert Peel remained at the head of affairs, he could easily propose another measure, which would meet the unanimous wishes of both Houses. The right hon. Gentleman, he had no doubt, would adopt such a course in the event of the present Amendment being carried; and whether it was a potato or a principle that influenced, they might be pretty sure he would succeed in carrying it out. Under all the circumstances, therefore, he should feel it to be his duty to vote for the Amendment of the noble Earl.

LORD CLONCURRY said, that as the question of distress in Ireland had been so often introduced into the discussion upon this question, and as he was connected with that country, he did not think it right to permit the debate to close without making a few observations. He could assure their Lordships—and he spoke from practical observation—that though the famine in Ireland was but partial, there were some districts in which the most grievous and afflicting destitution prevailed—in which the people had not even the miserable food on which they had been accustomed to subsist. He had witnessed more misery in Ireland than he thought he should ever see in any country. He never had any particular reason to admire Sir R. Peel; but in this case he thought he had acted wisely. The good sense of the people of Ireland enabled them to see, that by promoting a free trade among the nations of the Continent they would be ultimately benefited. The Government deserved great credit for the exertions they had made to save the people from famine; and if it were not for their prompt and humane interposition, he believed that ere this time thousands would have perished, and the followers of famine—disease and pestilence—would be now ravaging the land. He should oppose the Amendment of the noble Earl.

THE EARL OF WINCHILSEA said, he did not support the Amendment of the noble Earl on the ground of its affording any protection, but in the hope that the country might have some opportunity of constitutionally expressing its opinion at an election, before so great and important a measure as that submitted by Government became the law of the land. He was free to admit that if the Government had taken the constitutional course of appealing to the people, and the country had, through

their representatives, manifested an unequivocal and decisive wish to have these laws repealed, the House of Lords ought no longer to resist the change. There was another point to which he wished to call their Lordships' attention. He thought it unwise, imprudent, and unconstitutional to bind another Parliament to the acts of the present, by fixing the term of three years, which would include the period of a general election. Again, suppose at the next election there should be a decisive majority in favour of protection, what position could their Lordships hold then? They must either place themselves in direct opposition to the will of the people, or they must betray a vacillation and inconsistency which would for ever lower that House in the estimation of the people of England. It was a mere fallacy to suppose that the question was settled by now agreeing to the measure—it would only enkindle agitation. It had been said by a right rev. Prelate that some of their Lordships had called upon the Bishops to stand in the gap on account of the parochial Clergy; but he saw no harm in any one of their Lordships reminding the right rev. Bench that they were the natural representatives of the parochial clergy, and that they ought not to allow the feeling to go abroad that they were unmindful of their interests. He believed that what affected the interests of the Clergy, affected the moral, social, and religious interests of the whole community. He had been always consistent since he entered Parliament twenty years ago; he was no party man, but voted precisely as his conscience dictated to him, quite irrespective of any other consideration. He did not blame any man for an honest change of opinion; but he could not refrain from saying that when public men were placed in situations of confidence and trust, on considerations of certain principles to which they professed themselves deeply attached, they ought not, if they changed their own opinions, to attempt to force through Parliament any measure of so important, he might almost say, of so revolutionary a character, without giving the people an opportunity of expressing their opinions as to the propriety of the change. He had not been an agitator at any part of his life; but he considered that he had some interest in the counties with which he was connected, and he would agitate this question to the utmost of his power. There would soon be a dissolution, and a new House of Commons would soon reverse this measure. He im-

plored their Lordships, as they valued the independence of that House, and as they valued the respect and confidence of the people of England, not to allow this measure to pass without allowing the country to express its conviction respecting it. If they did, the people would no longer look upon them as the safeguards of the State; and they would manifest an apathy towards that interest which they were especially bound to cherish, totally unworthy of them. He would support the Amendment of his noble Friend.

LORD POLWARTH, who was almost inaudible, denied that the people of Scotland were in favour of the measure. Noble Lords opposite had quoted several instances of farms having been let in Scotland at a higher rent than before; and since the present measure was announced; but it would be found that in many instances the reason of such advance of rent was either because the farms had been improved since the former letting, by the expenditure of much labour, skill, and capital, or because by conditions in the new lease the landlord was bound to invest large sums of money on the improvement of the land during the occupancy of the incoming tenant. He believed that there would be no great diminution in the value of land under the proposed Bill; but he was convinced that it would occasion a considerable displacement of labour. He would ask what was to become of the labourers so displaced? Were they to be driven into the towns? Their Lordships, no doubt, had looked into those reports which were on the Table, describing the state of the labouring population in towns; and he must implore them not to pass a measure which would have the effect of driving away from their homes a considerable portion of our agricultural population. He would not trespass further on the attention of the House. He would content himself with saying that he should support the Amendment of his noble Friend.

EARL FITZWILLIAM could not agree with his noble Friend (the Earl of Winchelsea) that they ought not to pass the present Bill without an appeal to the country; for a dissolution upon a question of food was of a most dangerous nature. In a question like that, the interests and feelings of men were so mixed up that it was difficult to appeal to the sense of the people without, in some measure, exciting their passions. It was fortunate, therefore, that they had been enabled to legislate on this subject when an immediate dis-

solution was not intended. But, at the same time, he was far from saying that he approved of the measures of Her Majesty's Ministers. He thought that House had been ill treated by Her Majesty's Ministers. He thought that House should have had a voice in this question; and that they should not have been driven into a corner. He would ask Ministers why they had not the boldness, the honesty, and the candour to make that House a party to their measures? Were they afraid of making that House a party to these measures of legislation? The measure should have been introduced in the form of Resolutions, in the first instance: that was the course Mr. Pitt had adopted with respect to the opening of the trade with Ireland in 1786; that precedent might very well be followed in the present instance: for he said that the course Her Majesty's Ministers had taken was one not consistent with the character of men who had obtained power, as they had done, from the aristocracy and landed interest of England. They should have brought the consideration of this question into that branch of the Legislature in which the aristocracy of the country had more peculiarly a voice, and which was most intimately connected with the agricultural democracy of England; for it was not correct to say that the democracy was confined to large manufacturing towns. His noble Friend opposite knew that Lincolnshire teemed with an agricultural democracy; and he knew the extent and influence of the agricultural democracy of Cambridgeshire. He had acted along with that democracy, and he still loved it; though he had been recently made to feel the power of that democracy for the vote he had given on this question. But to return to the proceedings of Her Majesty's Ministers. He maintained that Her Majesty's Ministers had acted in a way that forfeited for them the confidence of every man who had placed reliance upon them; and he trusted that whatever appearance of coincidence there might be in some of the noble Friends near him with those who now wielded the Government of the country, they would never sully themselves by an intimate union with men who had conducted themselves in such a manner. There were many lessons to be derived from the debates, and from the course the two Houses of Parliament had adopted on this occasion; but there was one important lesson which he wished them to attend to, and that was,

the influence of party feeling. Whatever others had been, he (Earl Fitzwilliam) at least had been consistent upon this question. When he first obtained a seat in their Lordships' House, he brought forward the Corn Law question, and not one of their Lordships supported his Resolution. That was in the year 1833; and if free trade was good now, it was good then. In the year 1839, he again moved the question, and his Resolution was supported by 24 of their Lordships; and again in 1840, when the number of his supporters had increased to 42. Now, he should like any man to draw the distinction between 1846 and 1840. It would exhibit the power of party. The leaders of the two great parties in the House of Commons had agreed on this measure, and forthwith there were large majorities for it there; and in their Lordships' House 47 on the main question, and 33 on the first division in Committee. [LORD STANLEY: "Small by degrees, and beautifully less."] He hoped the majority would be larger that night. He could not run the risk of losing this Bill, as his noble relative (Lord Winchelsea) was willing to do. He would not run the risk—no, he would not run the risk of a general election upon it, and he did not think Her Majesty's Ministers would do it; he had full confidence in the wisdom of this measure, and therefore, as a practical man, he would avail himself of present opportunities. He did not know what might be the effect of the lapse of a year. He had never indulged in any exaggerated statements of the benefits to be derived from a repeal of the Corn Law; but now that he saw it within his grasp, he would venture to say that he believed it would confer a greater measure of benefit, and, in its results, of happiness upon the great mass of the people, than any measure which had been proposed of late times; it would give greater ease and comfort to all classes of the community. It would tend greatly to enlarge the sphere for the employment of labour; it would greatly augment the demand for manufacturing labour, and for all branches of labour immediately connected with manufactures, and even for agricultural labour; the necessity for making greater exertions would call into action a greater amount of labour. Protection, no doubt, had proved in its result, protection to—(not to say bad farming)—but an unadvanced state of agriculture; this measure would advance agriculture in every part

of the kingdom, and particularly in those now the least advanced, and where the nature and character of the soil were such as to cause the greatest difficulties. He felt the necessity of opposing this Amendment.

LORD BROUGHAM said, that he had been listening to many very able and important speeches which had been addressed to their Lordships in the course of the evening; but they were directed, so far as their arguments were concerned, not so much to the Amendments under their Lordships' consideration, as to the whole merits of the Bill before the House—not to the details, but to the entire measure. He should address himself to those speeches which had been made by the supporters of the Government against the Government, and against the Bill; but he should also have a word to say upon the handling which the Bill had that night got from its supporters. They had been making speeches precisely like the protection speeches on the second reading, attuned to the same gamut; he had been forcibly reminded of those choral symphonies which had sounded in their Lordships' ears for three long nights, with a loudness he had never heard equalled, and producing, especially to one not now in the prime of life, much the same sensation of fatigue as most persons experienced at a public dinner, after being made to bear the cheers of those at the table, and the music in the back ground, as exhausting as the roars. The process of argument by which some noble Lords had arrived at the conclusion they had adopted was certainly peculiar. A noble Friend near him (Lord de Mauley), for instance, was in favour of the Amendment, not because he liked or approved of a fixed duty, but merely because he was against the Bill; and he assigned as a reason for declining to argue the question at length, that he feared lest by so doing he should only weaken the arguments of the noble Marquess near him (Lord Clanricarde), who was the enemy of the Amendment, and the friend of the Bill. But he never was more struck than with the speech of the noble Lord (Lord Fitzwilliam), who had just made a strenuous attack on the measure and on its supporters, and its enemies, for all parties had come in for a share of his censure and vituperation. That noble Lord had carried on for some portion of the time during which he had been addressing the House, a conversation in a low

and confidential tone of voice with the noble Lord opposite; and his whole demeanour had reminded him (Lord Brougham) of an anecdote told of a learned Serjeant (Davy) of the Western Circuit. The Serjeant was upon one occasion addressing the court, but he at one time dropped his voice and proceeded with his speech nevertheless, though in a low tone. The jury not hearing a word of what he was saying, one of them asked him to speak up. "Yes, gentlemen," he replied, "I will when I come to anything material." And so it was with his noble Friend; but, inasmuch as he had not given the explanation which the learned Serjeant had, he (Lord Brougham) would wish to be satisfied that the House had really not lost anything of importance. He should, therefore, ask the question distinctly of the noble Lord opposite, to whom the strictly confidential parts had been addressed, what it was the noble Lord had been saying. [Lord STANLEY: Oh, nothing material.] He was satisfied. He had thought so. But his noble Friend had said, that nothing could be more insulting to the House, or more offensive to the Constitution, than the course taken by Her Majesty's Ministers in bringing this measure forward in the form of a Bill, instead of a Resolution, originating in the other House; and he had added, that by the course pursued, their Lordships' House had been driven into a corner. But there was no reason why the present measure should not be carried through in a manner similar to the other great popular measures which had preceded it. The Reform Bill of 1831, for instance, had not been brought before their Lordships in the form of a Resolution. It had been brought by Lord John Russell into the other House, on the memorable 1st of March, 1831; and their Lordships heard nothing more of it, or its progress, excepting through the ordinary channels of public information, somewhat in the Votes, much more in the newspapers, until after the Whitsuntide recess, when it came up to their House, in due form, as a Bill. But he had a defence still more in point; for the same course had been pursued with the Corn Bill of 1804. It had been so in 1815, in 1822, in 1827, ay, and with the Corn Bill of 1842, and that course had never been made a ground of objection. The alterations in the timber duties and the sugar duties had originated in the other House, and so had the alteration in

the Corn Laws, proposed by the former Ministry, and which was similar in principle to the Amendment then before their Lordships. It had been originated by the late Ministry in the other House, and it was there they were beaten upon it. But to proceed to another objection of the noble Lord. When he spoke of popular feeling upon the question, and his unwillingness to appeal to the country, he (Lord Brougham) could not help, when he heard him drawing forth cheers from the enemies of the Bill at the close of every sentence, exclaiming, "Oh, save me from my friends!" He differed *toto cælo* from the noble Lord on that subject. What had he said? Why, that they dared not appeal to the people. [*Loud cheers from the protectionist benches.*] Those cheers came very naturally from the enemies of the Bill, and the friends of the Amendment; but how his noble Friend, the supporter of the Bill and enemy of the Amendment, could be so deluded, so utterly mistaken, as to suppose that there was any foundation for the notion that an appeal to the people would be fatal to the Bill, he was unable to comprehend. He (Lord Brougham) thought, and he felt perfectly satisfied, that an appeal to the people would prove favourable to the Government and to the Bill. But his noble Friend had gone on to say, that his reason for voting against the Amendment was the delay it would occasion in the settlement of the question—that time for thought and for consideration would be fatal to the measure. [*Loud cries of "No, no!"*] He (Lord Brougham) did not mean to say that his noble Friend had used exactly those expressions; but what he had said, he contended, amounted to it, and was the same in substance. Now, far from thinking his noble Friend justified in using such expressions, he was of opinion, for the reasons he had twice already adduced in debate, that the more thought and the more consideration were given to the measure, the more it would advance in public estimation. He should next endeavour to direct the attention of their Lordships to the real question before them; but before doing so, he was truly sorry that the course the debate had taken, deviating widely from that question, compelled him, how reluctant soever, to follow, in the first place, the deviation; and therefore he must begin by addressing himself to the speech of the noble Lord connected with Scotland (Lord Polwarth), who had brought forward the cases of three farms, in order to show

the effects to be expected from the present measures in the event of their passing into law. Now, he should say, that he paid very little attention to such cases. When the House was merely informed of the terms upon which farms were formerly let, and those for which they were either let, or likely to be let or sold, at present, their Lordships were really left almost wholly uninformed upon the subject; for there were so many collateral circumstances which would of themselves, independently of any alteration in the laws, be sufficient to affect materially the value of any particular farm, that the mere mention of comparative prices and offers signified nothing unless they could be put in possession of all the circumstances of each case. The noble Lord had stated that one of the farms he had mentioned had risen only 200*l.* in value. Now that might be too little to expect; but did it not strike the acuteness of the noble Lord, that those figures were anything but proof? The great argument of the enemies of the Bill amounted to this, that the price of wheat would tumble down 10*s.* a quarter. Now, the produce of this country had been stated at three quarters to the acre, on an average; whilst that of foreign countries was set down at somewhere about fourteen bushels. Well, let them set down the loss, according to their own showing. It was 30*s.* an acre—that was the loss expected by the great alarmists: it was not his (Lord Brougham's) statement; he was merely stating the loss put down by the great alarmists, the sum which they said would be cut off from the value of land by this frightful Act. Now, he would administer a little comfort to his noble Friends, which was really, he thought, much wanted, for there were some who seemed to delight in drawing pictures of desolation and terror, and in exciting despair amongst their hearers, while they surfeited themselves with it. They seemed to be unsatisfied unless they fed upon horrors—

"*Gens ratione ferox, et diris pasta chinæris.*"

If there were to be the fall of 30*s.* an acre, which had been set down by those alarmists as the inevitable result of this measure, and if the very highest average rent at which land could be let at present were, as it was admitted on all hands to be, from 30*s.* to 2*l.* an acre, it is evident that the loss, instead of involving a considerable reduction in the rents, ought to

involve the amount of the whole rent. Let them suppose a farm of 300 acres, let at 30*s.* to 40*s.* an acre, laid down in wheat, on which a loss of 30*s.* an acre should be suffered in consequence of the proposed measure of free trade—it was evident that there was an end of the rent. But what was the real amount of the fall experienced on those farms on the borders of Scotland which had been mentioned, and where the rent could not be expected to be so high as the high average of rich land in England? Why, it was only a trifling reduction from what might have been expected had no change taken place. But he had promised their Lordships some comfort, and they should have it. He would administer a little to them in the form of statements which had been made to him. He had already said that he paid but little attention to such things by way of proofs; but if they were valuable for one side, they were, at least, equally good for the other, and at least the same amount of weight ought to be given to them. He would therefore refer to two only out of several letters he had received upon the subject. The first stated, that as the Corn Bill was now under the immediate consideration of the House of Lords, the writer thought it well to put him (Lord Brougham) in possession of the result of a sale which had taken place at Garraway's. It was the sale by auction of a farm of 200 acres in Essex, by Mr. Compton. It was said to be in a wretched state of cultivation, and was situated within five miles of a town which he need not mention. The rent was 180*l.* per annum, without a residence; and the sum it fetched under the hammer the day before yesterday, since the Corn Bill had been sent up to their Lordships' House, nay, more, since it had been read a second time there, was—how much did their Lordships think? How many years' purchase did they imagine? Their Lordships should remember that the sale had been effected in the face of all the disastrous consequences prophesied as the inevitable result of the free-trade measures of the Government. Well, the farm had fetched thirty-six years' purchase. It had been sold for 6,500*l.* without reserve, so that the purchaser had been content with $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. for his money, with the fear of the Corn Bill before his eyes. It said little for the terror with which capitalists looked upon the measures of the Government, when they were contented to invest their money at $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. The

second letter stated that the result of a sale which had taken place that evening (on which it had been dated) had quite astonished every one present—even the auctioneer himself was so surprised as to have said that he had almost become a convert to free-trade principles, so far did the prices realized exceed even the valuation which he himself had set upon the property. In many other instances the prices realized were double what the properties would have fetched two years ago; and, continued the writer, the farms are all situated in the neighbourhood of the Bentinck estates, a relative of whose proprietor had made himself conspicuous of late by strong language against the measure. From 50*l.* to 90*l.* an acre had been realized for fen and marsh land. The statement, he admitted, like all such statements, proved very little one way or the other; but as he had before said, if statements were good for one side of the question, they were equally so for the other. But with regard to the principle of the Amendment, he far preferred the sliding scale to a fixed duty. He was for free trade in corn; but if he had to make a choice with regard to a duty to be laid on for the purposes of revenue, he greatly preferred the sliding-scale to the fixed duty. As a measure of finance, without protection the fixed duty was nonsense; for unless the same duty were imposed upon the corn at the mill as was charged upon foreign grain imported, it amounted to protection still. Under such a plan, therefore, they had all the evils of protection, and none of its benefits. The noble Earl (the Earl of Wicklow) had contended that from the revenue to be produced by his fixed duty, and from an alteration in the sugar duties, they might be able to repeal a portion of the income tax; but he (Lord Brougham) altogether objected to a tax on corn—it was the worst tax that could be imagined. He denied that it would enable them to reduce any portion of their taxation, or to lower the property tax; and he asserted that there was no sort of tax more directly opposed to every principle of financial justice and policy than one which was imposed upon the bread of the people. His noble Friend had denied that the fixed duty would have the effect of raising the price of the people's bread; but surely if the price of wheat imported from Dantzic or Odessa were 35*s.*, the addition of the 5*s.* fixed duty would necessarily tend to keep it

higher than it would be without any such duty. But whatever tended to raise the price of the prime necessary of life was unjust. It amounted to a poll tax, for it was a tax which every man would have to pay alike, inasmuch as every man consumed about the same quantity of the prime necessary of life. Before he sat down he would admit one thing, and that was that the question came before their Lordships surrounded with peculiar and most extraordinary circumstances; and he fully agreed with one observation of his noble Friend, that it stood little chance of being decided upon its merits: the real merits of the question stood as little chance of being regarded as did the real opinion of Parliament of being heard upon it. The position of parties with regard to it was marked by unparalleled singularity. Between candid adversaries and lukewarm supporters—doubtful enemies and self-styled friends—the measure came before their Lordships with the most extraordinary concatenation of conflicting elements they had ever witnessed—the most strange he had ever seen surrounding any question. Their Lordships had been told that a number of Members of both Houses would vote for the Bill, not from any love for free trade, but to prevent what they believed, and what they had a right to believe, was worse—a change of Government. But up got the noble Earl, and cut that ground at once from under their feet; for he told them that the change was inevitable. He said that all their voting for the Bill, their deciding in favour of the measure, would not stay that change one week; and so convinced was he of what he said, that he addressed his noble Friends behind him, and gave them a lecture for the purpose of smoothing their way to his accession to office. Well, but if that were so, the Bill is lost. [A noble Lord: Why so?] He would tell them why. Because there were a good number of their Lordships, and of the Members of the other House, who voted for it, not from any liking they had to it, but because they had a great disliking to his noble Friends behind him coming into office. Their dislike to his noble Friends was greater than their dislike to the Bill; but after the statement of the noble Earl opposite—who from his position and his connexion with the Government ought to be well informed on the subject—that there would immediately be a change of dynasty, those noble Lords would of course vote for the Amendment. It might have been very

judicious to try and gain half a dozen votes by making that statement, which he was sure the noble Lord had not intended; but he (Lord Brougham) could not allow him to have the advantage of his manœuvre. Indeed he did not believe the assertion at all: he did not think that change would take place, and he observed that his noble Friend (Lord Stanhope), who thought he had a right to know the prices of next year, did not call upon any one to say who would be Minister twelve days hence, nor to declare, on the average of the next twelve months, how many Ministers would be in office (because there might be a number of short Administrations); but he would assume the character of a prophet, and would venture to predict that there would be no change. There was no more honest and conscientious set of men in the House, than the protectionist party in that House, and he entertained for them the highest respect. But the noble Earl who had spoken last, had given his friends and his party, the Whigs, the advice that, out of regard to the character of the minority to which they belonged, they should not enter upon—nay more, he implored them, and was joined in his entreaties by another noble Lord, not to think of anything so foul as—a coalition with the noble Lords opposite. Oh, said the noble Lord, do not be led to do anything of the kind! He begged the noble Lord not to let himself be frightened from his propriety by the anticipation of any such event. A coalition required two parties. It was not enough to say, "I will coalesce with you," if the other party refused the offer. Now, he did not believe in the existence of any willingness on the part of his noble Friends opposite to lend themselves to any such coalition; and if he had any reason to doubt that conviction, he was aware of the fact that a noble Lord near him (Lord Londonderry) had lauded the Prime Minister expressly for having avowed that nothing could induce him to consent to such a coalition, and had founded his personal reason for supporting the Government in their present trials on the account of that manly declaration. The most zealous and sincere friends of protection and enemies to free trade had a pretty strong conviction that there would be no change. If not, why had they postponed by every means in their power the further progress of this Bill? He could explain it at once, and he would endeavour to refute the arguments

of the noble Lord on that subject, and take away his votes if he could. His noble Friends, who were very acute observers of what was passing around them, unless when they were blinded by alarm, saw what was passing elsewhere. They heard of certain meetings called for the purpose of evincing their cordial, candid, and honest sense of the great services rendered by the Minister and his Colleagues to the cause of free trade; for the purpose of aiding the Minister in his difficulties, and for the purpose of disclaiming all idea of factious opposition. [Lord STANLEY: Where? I don't see them.] There were none so blind as those who won't see. But these meetings had been called for these purposes—for the purpose of concerting support, in the other House of Parliament, to that measure which had been unanimously supported by the Opposition in their Lordships' House—he alluded to the Coercion Bill—and, above all, for the purpose of preventing any coalition between the enemies of the measure and the friends of the measure—between the enemies of the Government and the friends of the Government. He alluded to a meeting which could, he concluded, have been only held for the purpose of giving their cordial support to the Corn Bill, and of preventing any factious opposition to the Coercion Bill, and which was held, as he understood, last Saturday week. Those who attended clearly showed what they were after, for they said, we must make the Coercion Bill last very long in its way through the House of Commons, in order that the Corn Bill may be safe; if we turn out the Government, the Bill will be endangered. He judged from information he had received from a person who was present, and who had told him that a person from the sister kingdom undertook that there should be long debates; and no better persons were there for ensuring long debates than these great orators. Thus the Coercion Bill went on as they saw it from day to day. From Friday it was postponed till Thursday, and then no doubt it would be postponed to Monday; and if their Lordships had not by that time come to a decision on the Corn Bill, no doubt it would be postponed still further. The fact was, these persons dreaded a change of Government before the Bill was passed. There were also a few noble Lords on the cross benches who were opposed to the Bill, but had fallen into the trap which had been laid for them, and had given the Bill every

facility. They were then perfectly certain that there would be no coalition; they thought the Government was safe, and he thought so too. He therefore considered that the Amendment would not have the votes of those noble Lords. He hoped and trusted that the Amendment would be rejected—first, upon its merits, and he thought he had a right to assume that its effects would be ten thousand times worse than those of the sliding scale; but next, and principally, he called on the noble Lords whom he now addressed to reject it, because that would be neither more nor less than rejecting the Bill:—the Bill was lost if the Amendment were carried. As their Lordships had sanctioned this Bill on its second reading by a large majority; as they had unanimously resolved to go into Committee upon it; and as they had last night rejected by a considerable majority the Amendment of the noble Duke (the Duke of Buckingham), because if it had been adopted the Bill would have been lost; he called upon them now to negative this Amendment for the same reason, because if they adopted it they would reject the measure.

LORD STANLEY: My Lords, my noble and learned Friend, I think, commenced his speech with this observation—that for two hours he had been listening to a discussion, of which not the whole, no—nor the major part, no—nor a large portion, no—nor any portion whatever, had been directed to the subject-matter of the Amendment now before us. After that preface, my Lords, I naturally concluded that my noble and learned Friend was about to direct his attention, and that of your Lordships, strictly and exclusively to the speech of my noble Friend behind me, who proposed the Amendment. But no, my Lords, I have listened with the deepest attention—and with the most amused attention—not for two hours, but certainly for one hour, to the speech of my noble and learned Friend; and I may venture to repeat his own words, that not the whole, no, nor the major part, no, nor a considerable part—I may almost say, no, nor any part at all, was directed to the subject-matter now under your Lordships' consideration. And, my Lords, my noble and learned Friend has done great injustice to his own individual person. He began by regretting the fatigue which, in common with your Lordships, he experienced, and which, as the noble and learned Lord said, was severely felt by one who, like himself, was not in

the prime of life and beauty. Now, my noble and learned Friend did himself injustice. I am sure, when your Lordships look at my noble and learned Friend, you will be reminded, as I was myself, of these lines of Milton:—

“And now a stripling cherub he appears,
Not of the prime, yet such as in his face
Youth smil'd celestial, and to every limb
Suitable grace diffused.”

After these complaints of the effects which my noble and learned Friend—who, as he says, is not now “of the prime”—experienced from the heat and from the fatigue of this long discussion, he proceeded, not indeed to the Amendment now before the House, but to a variety of subjects more or less—but I must say rather less than more—connected with this question. He first referred to the course of proceeding adopted with regard to this measure; and he asserted that that course, so far from being unusual, was usual, ordinary, and proper. I venture, in all humility, to differ with him. I think the instances relied on by my noble and learned Friend were not instances in point; and I agree with the criticism which has been made on the mode of proceeding. I think when a measure of this importance is sent before your Lordships by Bill, and it is then pleaded that you can make no amendment in it because it is a Money Bill, your Lordships are deprived of that fair weight and influence in the consideration of important political measures which are due to your station. I entirely admit the propriety of the maxim, that when a measure is introduced for the purpose of revenue, when the question is that of levying taxation upon the people, the House of Commons should watch with a laudable jealousy any interference on your Lordships' part. But I do say this—that your Lordships' rights are infringed, that the Constitution itself is infringed, if under cover of a measure involving a mere consideration of money, to however small an amount, your Lordships are debarred from expressing your opinion on all the greater political considerations which may be involved in it. In point of fact, if your Lordships are to be told, “Take this measure, or reject it—take it you must, or reject it altogether, because it is a Money Bill,” your Lordships have no voice in the settlement of the question; you must accept it or reject it altogether, because the alteration of a single clause would be fatal to the Bill. If this doctrine is to prevail, it was in vain that my noble Friend behind me interfered,

with regard to this very measure, to prevent a still more outrageous infraction of the privileges of your Lordships' House. It was, we know, the intention of Her Majesty's Government to pass resolutions for the admission of foreign corn, without consulting your Lordships on the subject. My noble Friend behind me pointed out the gross impropriety of such a course of proceeding. The Government, I admit to their credit, saw the impropriety of the course, and retracted their determination. [Earl GREY here made an observation to the noble Lord.] Yes; I am quite correct in the statement. It was originally declared by the Prime Minister in the other House of Parliament, that so soon as the Resolutions should have been adopted by the other House, corn would be admitted free of duty; but representations were made to the Government of the injustice and impropriety of such a measure, and the want of precedent for the proceeding. The course which has been adopted was taken upon that remonstrance, and the measure was sent up for your Lordships' consideration and assent. But, my Lords, if your Lordships are not to alter the Bill, that concession was nugatory and ludicrous. If you are not to alter the Bill, the noble Earl opposite was right, when he said that the proper course to have taken would have been this, that a Resolution should have been adopted by the House of Commons, and then sent up for your Lordships' concurrence; and that upon the joint agreement of the two Houses a Bill should have been framed; so that, at the proper time, and in the proper manner, your Lordships would have had legitimate control over the measure. "But," says the noble and learned Lord opposite, "there are precedents; look at the Reform Bill." Why, what question of the privileges of this House was involved in that case? My noble and learned Friend, though he was a Member of the Government at the time, has forgotten the circumstances which occurred with regard to that measure. The second reading was carried by a majority of one in the House of Commons; Parliament was dissolved, and the sense of the country was taken on the subject. In those days it was not thought either inexpedient or unconstitutional, upon a great and important question, to refer to the sense of the country, and afford them an opportunity of sustaining the Government. The country did sustain the Government of that day; in a new Parliament

the Bill was again introduced, it was sent up to your Lordships' House; you exercised the privilege which you undoubtedly possessed, and you made a vital amendment in the Bill—your Lordships, in fact, rejected the Bill. A new Bill was introduced, and was sent up to your Lordships' House, and that measure ultimately received your assent. Were you ever told that it was impossible for you, consistently with the privileges of the House of Commons, to interfere with that Bill?—or can this case be adduced, as forming any precedent to justify the course now pursued, when, on the plea that this Corn Bill is a Money Bill, and nothing but a Money Bill, you are told that you have not the right to amend it in the slightest degree, for by doing so you would violate the privileges of the House of Commons? The first precedent of the noble and learned Lord fails him altogether, and the second will be found equally untenable. I do not know what might have been the intention of the Government in 1842, but the course they then took was this: a Resolution was moved in the House of Commons preliminary to the introduction of the Bill relating to their commercial policy. I must observe—and this is rather an important point of the case—that when these measures were announced, they were not introduced as commercial measures, or as great measures of policy, but they were brought forward by the Chancellor of the Exchequer as a portion of his Budget, and avowedly and expressly for the purpose of making up the deficiencies of a falling revenue. Upon the first Resolution of the three which they introduced, Ministers were defeated in the House of Commons; but the Bills framed upon the other Resolutions did not proceed one step beyond the original Resolutions, the object of which was to give effect to a financial measure of the Government for the purpose of revenue. I wish, before I pass to another part of the question, to refer for a moment to some observations which fell from my noble and learned Friend, with regard to the rents of certain farms. My noble Friend read letters—one from Essex, and another, I think, from a place near Wisbech—referring to the letting of certain farms; and he told us that a farm which had been in a miserable condition, had been recently let on a thirty years' lease at a considerably increased rent. I don't ask how near Chelmsford it was, or whether the railway passed through the farm, or whether the

timber was sold with the property, because, as my noble and learned Friend observes, unless you know all these circumstances, you know nothing at all. It may be asked why the particular circumstances of these farms should be stated? Because four particular farms had been referred to which were about, it was said, to be let at an increased rent. In answer to that statement of the noble Marquess opposite, my noble Friend went into the circumstances of these particular farms. With regard to one, he stated that an offer of 1,050*l.* was made for it in 1845; but on the knowledge of the measure proposed by Her Majesty's Government the offer was reduced to 880*l.*, with the further stipulation on the part of the tenant that the sum of 1,500*l.* should be laid out in improvements. These specific circumstances not only defeat the argument set up by noble Lords opposite, but they prove the precise contrary, and vindicate our argument that this measure will diminish the value of land. The noble and learned Lord argued, that if grain could be imported at 35*s.*, and a duty of 5*s.* were levied upon it, the grain would then sell for 40*s.*

LORD BROUGHAM had said, that the effect of the duty was to keep out grain until the price was such as to pay the additional duty; that it tended, in short, to keep up the price.

LORD STANLEY: I am glad to give the noble and learned Lord an opportunity of explaining what it was he did say; but, having taken down the noble and learned Lord's words, I confess I thought I was representing his argument correctly. I hope it will be admitted by the noble and learned Lord that putting on a 5*s.* duty raises the price to that extent?

LORD BROUGHAM repeated that what he had said was, that a duty kept out grain and raised the price.

LORD STANLEY: We understand it, and we are at all events, I should think, agreed that the duty won't raise the price 5*s.*, or anything like 5*s.*

LORD BROUGHAM did not say that. What he stated was, that the 5*s.* was not the measure of the price, but that it might be much greater as well as less. The effect of the duty was to keep out foreign grain, which would otherwise find its way into this country. Consequently it kept its price, though the amount of duty might not be the means of the addition to the price. [*Cries of "Order!"*]

LORD STANLEY: If my noble and

learned Friend meant to answer me, let him; if not, let him not interrupt me. I understood my noble and learned Friend to say, that if grain is imported at 35*s.*, and you put on 5*s.* duty, it will sell at 40*s.* He repels that with indignation—that the addition of a 5*s.* duty raises the price 5*s.* Then, I say, he admits that the 5*s.* duty will not raise the price to that extent, or anything like that extent; on which, up jumps my noble and learned Friend, and says—"I said exactly the reverse." This kind of two-edged sword is extremely difficult to deal with—I don't know where to have him. But we are agreed that the whole amount of corn will only be increased in price by the amount of the additional supply which will come in between the 5*s.* duty and no duty at all—that the amount of the variation of price will depend on the amount which will come in between the two points. My noble and learned Friend says it may increase the price of corn by the amount of the duty; but that it may increase it much more by the imposition of the 5*s.* duty. I don't understand how, if the corn of the whole world is admitted, you will reduce more than the difference of the duty you take off; it is only that amount between the 5*s.* and the 1*s.* that alters or affects the markets at home. I shall now go to the concluding remarks of my noble and learned Friend. My noble and learned Friend talks of certain motives, and certain influences, and certain combinations of party, which may affect the consideration of this measure. He talks of meetings, of which I know nothing, of coalitions, in the existence of which I disbelieve; and which myself, and those who think with me, entirely repel and deny. But I do not deny this, my Lords. I agree that it is a most extraordinary combination of parties that has been brought together for the purpose of carrying this Bill, a large majority of the Members of which, both in this House and the other, disapprove of this Bill—a Bill in which an immense majority of your Lordships disagree; I agree with the noble and learned Lord that it is owing to the extraordinary combination of parties, and not to the merits of the Bill, that it has a chance of being inflicted upon the country. I agree that Government have acted with prudence and discretion in not risking an election. They have acted well and wisely; I don't think the Government have any wish to risk that issue. My noble and learned Friend says that our tactics have not been good, and that we

should move postponements day after day. My Lords, I say that we are above such tactics. We rest our case upon reason, upon justice, upon public opinion; and if these are not sufficient to carry us through, and if your Lordships are influenced by the party considerations adverted to on the other side, we yield to your decision, and submit to the fate which we cannot avert. We care not to inquire whether a delay of twenty-four hours in our vote will cause additional embarrassment to the Government upon the Sugar Bill or the Coercion Bill, or whether it will give a better or a worse chance to noble Lords opposite of coming into power. We are influenced, we have been influenced, by no such considerations. I suppose we shall be overpowered; but we have put a plain case and plain reasoning before the public and the country; and the admissions of noble Lords will go before the public and the country, that but for a fortuitous combination of parties this Bill would never have passed through this or the other House of Parliament. The noble and learned Lord says that the Government is not likely to resign. He spoke as if he were supporting a Government in power. I don't doubt the sincerity of my noble and learned Friend's conviction that the Government are to remain in office. Perhaps he thinks that if the Government fall, the prospects of the country—of course, I mean—are not likely to be improved by it. I should not have troubled the House to-night but for the speech of my noble and learned Friend; but I may be permitted to say why we are prepared to support an Amendment of which we do not wholly approve. In an early period of my public life I was rather disposed to approve of a fixed duty in preference to a sliding scale, and I expressed that opinion in the House of Commons. Mr. Huskisson had the kindness to speak to me after the debate about the qualified opinion I entertained; and fully and clearly, as he always did, he entered with me, a young man, upon the grounds on which he thought a sliding scale was preferable to a fixed duty. I yielded a ready assent to the arguments of one to whom I looked up with so much respect and consideration. Mr. Huskisson convinced me, and I have always been of opinion since, that the sliding scale, as a measure, is better than a fixed duty—that it is a better protection to the producer in years of plenty, and a better protection to the consumer in years of

scarcity, and when you require the introduction of a large amount of foreign corn. The noble Earl (the Earl of Wicklow) would not, then, have had my vote in favour of his Amendment if the question to me had been, "Will you have a fixed duty or a sliding scale?" My answer is, that, as a measure of protection, I infinitely prefer the sliding scale; and if his Amendment had been moved before the second reading, or when there was a hope of inducing the House to come to a decision in favour of the sliding scale, the noble Earl would have found me among the warmest opponents, as I am now a warm supporter, of his measure. The efficiency of the sliding scale is, that it approaches the limits of exclusion in times of abundance, and the limits of free trade in times of scarcity. The greater the oscillations the more efficient the operation of the sliding scale. But, as you have determined to alter and materially to amend the Corn Law—as you have rejected a proposal for continuing the sliding scale, and are now asked to give your consideration to a fixed duty, I shall vote for that. I should have preferred a sliding scale to a fixed duty; but I prefer a fixed duty to no protection at all. In as far as Ireland and Canada are concerned, the duty proposed by the noble Earl is a real and efficient protection, so far as it goes. There is another question which ought not to be overlooked—I mean the revenue that will be derived from a 5s. fixed duty. The noble Earl at the Table spoke strongly on the increasing and dangerous tendency in our legislation to transfer all taxation from indirect to direct taxation. I agree with the danger. But if, Session after Session, you cut down whatever surplus you have by the reduction of all indirect taxation, with the further prospect of abolishing the income tax at the end of three years—if you give way on the Corn Laws this year, and on some other question next—if you throw away a million now, another million next year, and another million the year after, the reduction of the income tax is rendered impossible by the course you are taking during the period of its proposed temporary continuance. You are travelling in a vicious circle, and the result is that a temporary measure of indirect taxation becomes of necessity a direct tax, and a direct tax to an amount that throws upon it the whole burdens of the country. I warn you of the danger of this course. The statement

of the Chancellor of the Exchequer gives a surplus of 700,000*l.* this year, including the China ransom, and the ordinary amount received for foreign corn; the income during the last few years from the latter source has been fluctuating and various; but if we take the average at 700,000*l.*, we shall not be far from the mark. Look at the position in which you are placed. Your surplus of 700,000*l.* disappears after you have provided for the income of three-quarters of a year; and you are now coming down with a proposal which will debar you of an average income of 700,000*l.*, and that without raising the price of corn in this country. Such a measure would be rash at any time, but, above all, when we know that the loss of the income tax is to be provided for three years hence. We do not know what the situation of the country may be then. We don't know who the Government may be then. There is reason to believe—at least, I believe—notwithstanding what has fallen from the noble and learned Lord, that it is not likely to be the present Government. Is it fair, then, for you to say that you have provided for the revenue of this year, but that it is impossible for you to raise what has brought us in 700,000*l.*, and this contemporaneously with the reduction of the income tax, which has given us 5,000,000*l.*? Surely this is not prudent; and it is hardly fair to those who succeed you. You may have a new Government, but you must have a new Parliament, which must be called together to discuss and decide on the duties that ought to be imposed, and the policy that ought to be pursued, with respect to the revenue. Therefore, I say, you are called upon to adopt this Amendment with respect to the present revenue—with respect to fairness to succeeding Ministers—with respect to the exigencies, not only of the present time, but of the time to come; but, above all, with respect to the interests of the people of this country and their right to be consulted, of which I shall say no more than that if ever there was an occasion in which they had a right to have a voice in the final settlement of a question, it is in the one now under discussion. But, instead of that, you absolutely refuse to leave to a future Parliament that which must be legislated on by a future Parliament. You insist upon now cutting off future means of revenue—you insist upon now laying down future rules of conduct, not for yourselves, but for your successors—not for this, but for a

succeeding Parliament—not for the constituency who returned this Parliament, but the constituency which is to return the next Parliament; and if I wanted an additional argument in favour of the continuance, until another Parliament is summoned, of a moderate fixed duty, bringing in an unoppressive revenue into the Exchequer, I should find it in the statement to which I have already called your Lordships' attention, that this measure never would have been passed but for other considerations wholly alien to it, and for a combination of parties having no reference to the political merits of the question.

The MARQUESS OF LANSDOWNE was anxious to address a few words to the House before coming to, if not the last, at any rate the most decisive division that would take place on this question; and, in doing so, he assured the House that, but with one exception, he should confine himself, in the few remarks he should make, to the question immediately under discussion. That exception was to set his noble and learned Friend (Lord Brougham) right upon a subject on which he (Lord Lansdowne) was sure, not from any want of zeal, not from any want of activity, not from any want of inquiry, he had not shown himself perfectly lucid. The noble and learned Lord had described, with that power of eloquence which belonged to him, the chimerical alarms of the protectionists upon the subject of this Bill. He had nevertheless shown to their Lordships that he had formed to himself a chimera of his own; and the alarm which he had for some time past experienced at the possible unanimity of some parties in the State who were now disunited, and the possible agreement of some descriptions of persons who had not hitherto been agreed, had so alarmed and excited the imagination of his noble and learned Friend, that he had thought it necessary to provide himself with information from all quarters, that should enable him to guard that House and the people of this country against those dreadful machinations, the result of which was likely to be something like agreement. He (Lord Lansdowne) did not know whether such possible agreement would be the misfortune which the noble and learned Lord seemed to dread; but whilst he fed on the chimera, the noble and learned Lord had endeavoured most unsuccessfully to provide himself with information on the subject. His noble Friend's search after information had not confined itself to this

would thus make a law, though it might have the effect of raising prices to a certain degree, would not do so in the degree and to the amount of its intention, because the greater amount, I was told, which would be paid by the farmers, than that being his opinion, while he saw that the noble Lord opposite (the Earl of Westmorland) had adopted the child of colons, and had taken a reduced amount of duty, will be could not say either that the amount of duty which he, the Marquis of Lansdowne regarded, or the amount of protection which noble Lords might regard, was worth contending for in comparison with the prospect of settling this question. The influence which he had lost of replying to the noble Lord, had he had the opportunity of doing so, in the early part of this discussion, had been greatly diminished by all that had passed in the course of the debate; they had heard a great many arguments in favour of the Motion of the noble Lord, but not one argument except his own in favour of a fixed duty, which was the object of that Motion. There was not one noble Lord who had not thought it necessary, in supporting the Motion of the noble Lord, to declare himself a friend to the particular system which he was desirous of introducing. Noble Lords opposite told them they were about to adopt the child of that side of the House; but those who stood with him were obliged to look to the sort of treatment their child would receive in such hands. No one who had heard the noble Duke on the cross-bench, and noble Lords opposite, could doubt that if they gave up their child to be nurtured by noble Lords opposite, not a great many months would elapse before it would come to have eyes or teeth at all. It was not concealed that the object of proposing this Motion was to obtain first the rejection of the present Bill, and next a declaration of the intention. If noble Lords succeeded in those objects, would any one tell him that in a general assembly they would use their influence to obtain a majority from the country favourable to a fixed duty? He was persuaded they would use every effort to get a majority favourable to absolute protection, and then there would be an end of the child they had placed in the hands of noble Lords opposite. It was only as a last expedient, a *ultima ratio*, that this fixed duty was proposed, and for the mere purpose of drawing down the bill into the battle which was then going on.

While Lord opposite would wish to see it extended, the Marquis said he was limited in looking at this Motion as an attempt, though not an extraordinary one, to extinguish the Bill altogether, which he was not prepared to do. On the contrary, he was prepared to make sacrifices in the progress of settling this Bill to increase the size of the land. He was in favour of its decreasing too, because he was sanguine enough to hope that it would prove to be the instrument of the question. It had been asserted by the noble Duke that Duke of Portland, as well as noble Lords who had spoken, that by passing this Bill they would not get rid of the question in this session. The noble Marquis of Lansdowne believed, however, that after this Bill had passed it would be much more difficult to raise anything like a serious vote of dissent on this subject. He was not going to indulge in prophetic, the danger and difficulties of which he knew on all occasions, but particularly with regard to such a measure as this; but this he would say, that at the end of three, or four, or five years, he could not say which, but that the issue of a free trade, or a question would not remain in its present position. The experience of the country with regard to that law will have furnished evidence which will take away the power of noble Lords to agitate the country on this subject, at least if the result was such as he was sanguine enough to expect. If that should not be the case, how can, and if the predictions of the noble Lord opposite were correct, there was no doubt that there would be a second great revolution of agricultural agriculture in noble Lords had prophesied, were nearly ignored, and the manufacturing interest also in a state of rebellion; and the prospect of those interests could not be regarded as those who expected good results from the Bill found themselves disappointed, and that the agricultural and manufacturing interests suffered under its operation according to the prediction of the noble Lord opposite. Then there would be a union of opinion upon the subject, which would make a union of dissent to proceed with colons and without agriculture a section of the whole question. It, however, as he declared by the passing of this Motion, we were the end of years to come, instead of a few months, to agriculture and trade, which was a very different matter, they might perhaps prove to be

they adopted this measure; but he did not believe that there was the slightest danger of any such occurrence; and, therefore, because he did not believe it he would support this measure. It was not his intention to appeal, and he never had appealed, as an argument, to the probable effects which this measure would produce on the price of food; he had never excited any opposition to the Corn Laws on the score of their repeal being calculated to produce a great and sudden change of prices; for, notwithstanding that it would have a tendency to that effect, it would not effect so much in producing cheaper food, as in preventing an undue rise in the price of food, and giving greater security by that effect. He would not recur at length to arguments which had so frequently been used during the course of the debate, in order to satisfy their Lordships that the apprehensions of a sudden rush of food from other countries to such an extent as to overwhelm this country were unfounded; but there was one argument to which he attached very much importance with regard to this subject; that was the case of Ireland. That afforded an argument which had not as yet been answered. He would ask their Lordships to consider whether when Ireland, which was alongside England, and was charged with what would appear from the statements of those who dreaded that sudden rush of food to be the elements of mischief, cheap food, cheap labour, and rivers and steamers to convey her produce to this country—he would beseech their Lordships to see what little effect that facility of sending cheap corn to this country had produced—to consider what had been its absence of effect for the last forty years; and when they had considered that, he would ask how they could entertain any just apprehensions of this country being inundated with cheap food from countries which, though they were in possession of the same means of mischief, were yet so much more distant? He found from the best authority, that the proportion of agricultural labour in Great Britain and Ireland was as follows:—In Great Britain, there were employed in agricultural labour 1,050,000 persons, whilst in Ireland there were 1,100,000 persons engaged in agriculture. In Great Britain the produce of agriculture was valued at 34,000,000*l.*, and in Ireland the produce was only estimated at 14,000,000*l.*; thus showing that five labourers in Ireland produced only the same amount as two labourers in Great Britain. He did not mean

to join in censures on the Irish landlords; he believed that many of them had been much maligned; he believed that many of them devoted much attention to the improvement of the cultivation of land in Ireland; and he, of course, did not suppose that they paid less attention to the cultivation of their estates than the German barons or Russian boyards: and yet we were told that the proprietors in those countries were to inundate the country with cheap corn. From the example of Ireland he could not believe that any such effect would take place, as well as from his experience of every other case where he had seen duties taken off. In every one of these cases the effect produced was no great diminution in the value of the article, but a great increase in the amount of our commerce, which was so essential to our national prosperity; and upon the effect of such removals of duties on the commerce of the country he founded his approbation of the Bill. He believed that whilst it would tend to diminish prices of food, it would compensate the owner of land, the occupier, and the labourer on the land by the demand caused by the advanced condition of the population; and that thus a power would be obtained sufficient to bear down the effect of the measure on prices, and to bear up agriculture as connected with the commercial interest of this great country. He hoped, therefore, that this Bill would pass into a law.

LORD BROUGHAM rose amid loud cries of "Question," but claimed a right to be heard in explanation. If any noble Lord thought that he did justice in listening to the attack, and attempting to clamour down the defence, he differed from that noble Lord as to what was justice and what was becoming a nobleman or a gentleman. That was his opinion; he might have formed an erroneous view of both those characters, but that was his opinion; and therefore he asked their attention while he defended himself from the attack of his noble Friend. His noble Friend most grievously misapprehended him if he thought that he (Lord Brougham) meant to cast on him (the Marquess of Lansdowne) the slightest reflection as to the purity of his conduct. His noble Friend appeared to think he had done so; for his noble Friend defended his own conduct. He had known his noble Friend now upwards of half a century; and he had never known his noble Friend to act so as to require even an explanation. But would not any noble Lord think from what

fell from his noble Friend that he (Lord Brougham) had been playing the unworthy part of collecting information, as an eaves-dropper, of spying into what passed at a meeting within the walls of a private mansion—of collecting that information from reporters or secret informers? What if that meeting had been attended by from sixty to eighty persons—what if it had been summoned by circular—what if the members when they dispersed, talked of what had passed at the corner of every street—what if they spoke about it in the privacy of every club where persons who were politicians and persons who were not politicians passed their time—what if reports of that private meeting, held at a private mansion, appeared in the newspapers to the length of a column and a half, as he had read in a newspaper that was brought to him by a friend of his, who was not at the meeting, but who was a sincere friend of the Corn Bill? Surely, there was an end of privacy—an end of private information—an end of violating the sanctity of private dwellings—an end of unduly obtaining information by means of secret informers—an end of the advice which his noble Friend had given him, that when next he employed reporters he should provide persons who would give no inaccurate reports. The friend he had mentioned was greatly alarmed at the probable risk to which that meeting exposed the passing of the Corn Bill; and it was told him by a person who was not at the meeting that part of what passed (which was not mentioned in the report) was some advice given respecting the passing of the Coercion Bill. That was suppressed in the report. He then asked why that part was suppressed; he was told that it was thought it ought not to be made public during the debates on the Coercion Bill. There was, therefore, something said at the meeting about the passing of the Coercion Bill; and now they were to be told that advice was given, not to protract the debates on it, but dissuading from protracting them. He then went to two other friends of his, and they told him that some members of the meeting had then said, "We will take care that the division on the Coercion Bill does not take place until the Corn Bill has passed in the Lords." His noble Friend had said that the meeting was strongly recommended not to protract the debates on the Coercion Bill. [The Marquess of LANSDOWNE: I said, not to unduly protract.] Then his noble Friend had got into a dilemma, for either the advice was quali-

fied, and was not unduly to protract, which meant to protract, but not unduly, or the noble person who gave that advice had no power or influence on those to whom he gave it; for anything less followed, anything more entirely contemned and acted against, than that advice had been, he (Lord Brougham) had never seen. With respect to the remarks of his noble Friend (Lord Stanley) applying to himself, he must say that a less fair or more extraordinary course—he would say, with all kindness to his noble Friend, a more unscrupulous course, than his noble Friend had taken he never saw in any place; for his noble Friend, in order to introduce his quotation—a very excellent joke, he admitted—had put in a word which he (Lord Brougham) had never used, which he never had an idea of using, and which his noble Friend could not have imagined that he used. He never dreamt of using that word—a word which he, at his time of life, as well as his noble Friend at his less advanced time of life, had both of them the greatest possible interest in rasing out of their vocabularies. Such a mere invention was resorted to for the purpose of introducing a quotation in jest. But there was another thing said by his noble Friend of a different kind, of a more serious nature. He was astonished at, and must most indignantly repel and cast from him, the insinuation with which the noble Lord closed his remarks. He (Lord Brougham) stated that he believed the present Government would not fulfil the wishes of those who desired to see a change of Administration; that there would be no change; and his noble Friend took upon him to state that no doubt he (Lord Brougham) was showing, by the zeal of his defence, that he was defending a Government that was not going out. That statement was cheered by some, apparently ignorant of the history of the last seven years, and the proceedings in Parliament during that time. It was cheered by some who had not access to know the facts as his noble Friend (Lord Stanley) knew them. He defied any man breathing to cast the shadow of a shade of an imputation on his motives in defending the measures of the present Government. He asked what he had gained by taking part with the present Government? He called on all the noble Lords who sat there, and with whom he was joined in the defence of their measures, in the defence of their official conduct and Ministerial existence, from his noble and gallant

Friend the noble Duke opposite, who knew what he alluded to, down to the latest admitted into the Cabinet, who knew it less, or not at all, as they were not in the Cabinet at the time—he called upon all of them to say if there was the shadow of an imputation upon the motives, the absolute and necessary purity of the motives, which led to his defence of this Government. It was no fault of others—it was his fault, and his fault only, that he was out of office, a supporter merely, and a friend, of the present Government. That Government was no sooner formed than he declined, firmly but respectfully declined, most high and brilliant offers, and coupled with absolute political independence. This should not have been wrung from him but for the imputation conveyed (unintentionally, he believed) by his noble Friend. He certainly had chosen to be unconnected with office, to hold no office, either judicial or otherwise, in, or in connexion with, the present Government, for reasons of his own, for reasons applying to his own personal convenience, and from no want of respect for its Members, from no want of confidence in them, or want of friendship for them individually. He could not allow that debate to close without making this statement. When it was said to a man that the Government was not “likely to change because he defended them so well,” what was it but to cast an imputation on his motives for so defending them? One word more. He had never cast any imputation on the motives of the protection party. He had never blamed them for their opinions, but he had blamed them for not using better tactics for the defeat of this measure. His statement was, that they might have protracted the debate till a change in the Government took place; and that they might thus have defeated the Bill, which he rejoiced they had not: nothing more had he said in the matter. He had to apologize to their Lordships for detaining them, and would not enter into the question before the House, except to say that 5s. was no measure for the protection of the home-market.

The EARL OF BESBOROUGH wished to say a few words in relation to the meeting to which the noble and learned Lord had referred, and which had taken place at the House of a noble Friend. It was right he should state that the meeting was one of that description the nature of which the noble and learned Lord knew as well as he did. It was held in reference to one par-

ticular question, the Coercion Bill; and was in no way connected with the Corn Bill. That meeting took place at the House of his noble Friend, in order that he might consult those with whom he usually acted as to what should be done with that measure: there were present from sixty to seventy, or more persons, and among those a great number connected with Ireland. He asserted, distinctly, that no reference was made to any such proposal as postponing the discussion on the Coercion Bill till the Corn Bill had passed—that there was nothing stated in reference to any connection between different parties, though undoubtedly there were many at that meeting connected with Ireland, who stated distinctly that they had committed themselves to their constituencies to give every opposition in their power to the Coercion Bill, and that the probability was the discussion would be protracted considerably longer than those connected with the representation of this country might have wished. [Lord BROUGHAM: Beyond the Corn Bill.] No, he did not say that; on the contrary, it was the anxious wish of the meeting that the discussion should not be protracted unnecessarily. The noble Lord in whose House they met more than once pressed them not to protract it longer than was necessary; and he begged once more to repeat that there was no intimation, directly or indirectly, with regard to the Corn Bill as to any advice given to protract the one debate for the purpose of having the other finished.

LORD BROUGHAM: Then my informant has been very much in fault.

On Question “To insert after the word ‘wheat’ the words ‘not being the production of our Colonies, five shillings’ :”—Contents 107; Not-Contents 140: Majority 33.

So it was resolved in the negative.

House resumed.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Friday, June 19, 1846.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL—COMMITTEE. —FIFTH NIGHT.

House in Committee.

The DUKE of RICHMOND rose, in pursuance of the notice he had given, to move the addition of a clause to this Bill. Their Lordships were well aware of the

respectability of the great body of the tenant-farmers of this country, and therefore he was satisfied that they would not be surprised at his rising to endeavour, to the utmost of his power, to prevent that body of men from being consigned to entire ruin. Their Lordships well knew that the tenant-farmers of the country felt most strongly that the measures now about, he feared, to pass that House, would very much diminish the price of their produce, and therefore they were naturally anxious that they should be enabled to get rid of those engagements which they had entered into solely upon the faith of Acts of Parliament, and the numerous pledges which were from time to time so solemnly given, that protection was to continue to be the policy of the Government. Without any fault of their own the case had been altered. He said, without any fault of their own: for he must remind the House that in 1841 the tenant-farmers of the country returned their representatives to Parliament for the great object of maintaining protection to themselves as growers of corn, and to the other branches of domestic industry. They could not blame the farmers because some of these representatives had either been seduced or converted to hold other views than those for which they had been elected: in which class these men were to be put, they would have an opportunity of judging when the time arrived for giving them the reward which they were to receive for their change of opinions; but in the mean time it was a great hardship to the tenant-farmer, who had expended a large amount of capital in the improvement of the farm he had taken for 19 or 30 years on the faith of protection, and that his rent was to be paid with the price of wheat at from 50s. to 56s. a quarter—it was a great hardship to make that tenant adhere to his lease when wheat came down to 40s. a quarter. If he knew anything of the character of the high-minded, unsuspicious, and independent yeomanry and tenantry of this country, if he knew anything of their character, he was assured that they would scorn to ask a favour from Sir Robert Peel, who they felt had cruelly deceived them, and shown himself hostile to that interest which, up to the present time, was admitted by all to be the foundation on which was based the prosperity of all classes. He therefore asked not their Lordships to insert the clause he was about to propose as a favour, but he re-

spectfully demanded it as an act of justice to the tenantry of the country. It might be said that in making this Motion, he was expressing an opinion unfavourable to the landowners of the country. It was far from his intention to do so, because he believed that there were many—indeed, a considerable portion—of the landowners, who would not keep their tenants to the engagements they had entered into on the faith of protection, but would meet the exigencies of the case, and do their duty to the farmers. But they did not legislate for the liberal-minded landlord; they legislated there for those cold-blooded, heartless men, who told them they would screw out of the pockets of the farmers every shilling they could get from them; they were there to legislate also on behalf of the tenantry against trustees. A great part of the land occupied by the tenantry was held under trust; and, though he conceived that a trustee was bound to act as if the property were his own, yet there were many who felt themselves bound not to reduce rents so long as the farmer had capital to pay. Then there was land held under colleges and corporations, and they very well knew that when the responsibility was divided among many they were much less likely to be liberal than when the property belonged to themselves. He could not see the slightest reason that could be adduced against the proposal, because the Government said, and their new allies seemed to agree with them, that the present measure would not have the effect of reducing the price of corn. If it had not the effect of reducing the price of corn, then the tenant would not desire to give up his occupation; but if it eventually led to a great reduction in the price of food, surely they could not think it right to compel men to pay rent at the rate of 54s. a quarter of wheat, when they could in the market receive only 40s. If the wording of the clause he was about to propose did not meet their Lordships' approbation, there were other means of carrying out the principle which he advocated. They might give every tenant in the country the opportunity of converting the money rent he now paid into a corn rent; but what he contended for was, that they must not leave him to the tender mercies of the free traders. His opinion was, that from what he had seen in that House, there was but little doubt that the Anti-Corn-Law League would be triumphant; and if they were triumphant, he thought

it was well to secure to the utmost of their power the interests of the tenantry. His proposal was that the tenant should have the power, within six months after the passing of the Act, to give his landlord six months' notice of his intention to quit; and he proposed that, by arbitration—and if parties did not agree as to the appointment of the arbiters, he would leave the selection of the Commissioners for the Enclosure of Commons—he proposed that those arbiters should value the unexhausted improvements; because nothing could be more unfair than that the tenant should not get back a fair proportion of the outlay he had made for the benefit of his farm, and from which outlay he had not sufficient time to gain any profit. He was not asking their Lordships to do anything he was not prepared to do himself, even if they threw out the clause he had now to propose, for in 1842 he felt it to be his duty towards his tenants to allow all of those who had leases to give up their farms, because they had engaged to take those farms prior to the passing of the Corn Law of that year. This was only an act of justice, and he could not understand the slightest reason which could be adduced against it, unless, indeed, it might be said it would lose this Bill. He knew not whether, by the forms of Parliament, inserting such clauses as these would lose the Bill; but he was quite satisfied that there was nothing in themselves that ought to have that result. He had taken up so much of their Lordships' time in the discussions on this question, that he did not feel himself authorized to detain them on the present occasion, and also because it appeared to him the clause was self-evident, right, proper, and just, and therefore he would conclude by moving that the clause of which he had given notice be added to the Bill. The noble Duke then read the clause, as follows:—

"And be it enacted, That it shall and may be lawful for any Person or Persons in the actual Possession or Occupation of, or holding any Lands either in his, her, or their own Right, or in the Right of any Person or Persons under any of the Disabilities hereinafter mentioned; (that is to say,) Infancy, Coverture, Idiocy, Lunacy, Unsoundness of Mind, or Absence beyond the Seas, under a Lease, or an Agreement for a Lease for a Term of Years unexpired, or for the Lives or Life of any Person or Person named in the Lease, or for a Term of Years determinable upon a Life or Lives, at any Time or Times within the Space of Twelve Calendar Months from and after the passing of this Act, to give Six Calendar Months' Notice in Writing of his, her, or their Desire and Intention to quit or deliver up Possession of the

Lands comprised in the same Lease or Agreement for a Lease before the Expiration of his, her, or their Term or Interest therein, such Notice to terminate at that Period of the Year at which the Tenancy commenced; and on the Expiration of such Notice, the Term or Interest for which such lands shall be held under a Lease or Agreement for a Lease, shall absolutely cease and determine, in like Manner as if such Terms or Interest had expired by Effluxion of Time; and all the Covenants, Conditions, and Agreements of such Lease or Agreement for a Lease, so far only as the same may have a prospective Operation or Effect, shall be void and of no effect; and thereupon also such Person or Persons shall be entitled to the same Allowance or Remuneration, if any, by an incoming Tenant, or by the Lessor of the said Lands, as he, she, or they would have been entitled to in case such Lease or Agreement for a Lease had been determined by Effluxion of Time, the Amount of such Allowance or Remuneration, in case the Parties differ about the same, to be settled by the Arbitration of Two Persons, One to be named by each of the Parties in difference, and of such Third Person as the Two to be so chosen shall, by a Memorandum under their Hands before they proceed on the Arbitration, nominate and appoint, or any Two of them: Provided, that in case either Party shall within the Space of Fourteen Days next after the Expiration of such Notice as aforesaid, neglect or refuse to nominate or appoint One of such Two Referees, or in case such Referees if appointed, or either of them, shall within the Space of Fourteen Days next after their Appointment neglect or refuse to nominate or appoint such Third Person or Umpire, then the Amount of such Allowance or Remuneration shall be settled by the Arbitration of the Commissioners acting in the execution of the Act then in force for the Inclosure of Commons and Lands in England and Wales: And be it enacted, That in the Construction of this Section the word "Lands" shall extend to Lands, Tenements, and Hereditaments, and any undivided Share thereof which shall be in the Possession of, or held by, any Person or Persons as aforesaid, under a Farming or Husbandry Lease, or any Agreement for any such Lease."

The EARL of RIPON would not on this occasion enter upon the general question, but confine himself to the subject introduced by the noble Duke. He entirely agreed with his noble Friend as to the character and spirit of the class of men whose claims he professed to advocate; and he would not oppose the clause which he had now moved, did he not think that it would be productive of evil rather than of benefit to them; it would produce the utmost possible confusion from one end of the kingdom to the other. If carried into a law, there would be no end to the litigation which would inevitably follow in every part of the country. The principle of the clause was liable to great objections. Parliament was now asked to give to one party to a contract the power of compelling the other party to rescind it, not be-

cause the latter had been guilty of a violation of it, but because it might suit the interests of the former. That was a serious principle, and it was proposed to be introduced, not by a general enactment, but by a single clause in a Bill to which it did not apply. To him (the Earl of Ripon) it did not appear necessary, for he was not impressed with the noble Duke's terrors as to the impending ruin of agriculture; but the noble Duke himself could scarcely feel very strongly the necessity of the clause, after his own statement of what he should be prepared to do if the Bill should pass. There was not a more generous landlord in the country than the noble Duke; and experience of the conduct of the landlords proved that they would follow in the same steps; it was no mere compliment to them to say it. Great litigation would result from such an enactment; some tenants might endeavour improperly to take advantage of it; it would really produce the greatest imaginable evil to both parties. With a view to the interests of the landlords, but still more of the tenants, he felt bound to oppose it.

The EARL OF MALMESBURY could not deny the possibility of some inconvenience resulting from the proposed clause, but that would only be one of the many evil consequences attributable to this Bill. A great deal had been said of this being a landlord's question, and of the landlords coming forward to bear the brunt of the danger; but, when he heard of a noble Friend intending to raise his rents 10 per cent.; when noble Lords opposed to the measure were called "sturdy beggars;" when he heard what he had, in various quarters, he must suppose that there were landlords who were not ready to relieve their tenants from the consequences of this measure. It was very well for the noble Earl (the Earl of Ripon) to say, "Trust to the generosity of the landlords;" it would have been more to the purpose if he had answered the question as to the probable fall of price the other day. Night after night the House was told that prices would not fall, but that farming produce would rise: what protection had the tenant, then, from the fancies and whims of his landlord? This law would put the tenants in the power of the landlords. Even in the present year they were being made to sow under one law and reap under another, though they had the assurance of Cabinet Ministers that there should be no such change—from the Secretary at War, for instance, only a

few months since. Highly as he (the Earl of Malmesbury) thought of the generosity and goodness of English landlords, he was not ready to leave the tenantry entirely at their mercy; he preferred facing all the difficulties and confusion that might take place in consequence of this clause.

The EARL OF MORNINGTON had some documents with him, which he had a little hesitation in producing, because they had so much relation to himself; but during the progress of this question in Parliament he had turned his mind to the probable consequences of the measure, and had obtained some information not unworthy attention. For thirty years he had lived among tenant-farmers, but on returning from the Continent he found the most marvellous change in their social habits and character; he found that, as a noble and learned Friend of his had said, "the schoolmaster was abroad," and that whilst they had not lost any portion of their affection for the higher classes of society, they were a much more intelligent class of men than formerly, that their sons received a better education, and that they themselves looked much more forward than they used to do. Under these circumstances he thought it would be better for him to "take time by the forelock" as to his own estate. For thirty-three years of his life he never granted a lease. In the course of a very short period he gave notice to 110 tenants, but he took care that notice should not be given to any tenant whose rent was not upwards of 100*l.* a year. The greater portion of the estate he was speaking of was his own; the rest belonged to one of his family; and he saw those tenants himself; he never employed an agent except a bailiff. The farms were rented low; the rents had not been altered for something like twenty years. Now, he was about to state to the House what those farms had been let at before March, 1845, and what they were let at in March, 1845, for the future. The account was supplied by his bailiff; and his (the Earl of Mornington's) object was to show that it was a mistake to suppose that this measure would cause a great fall of rent, and that there would be no tenants to take farms; he believed that not one old tenant need be removed, and that there would be men with capital ready to take farms where the old tenants left, as was the case in some of the instances he was going to mention. He had not taken the best land nor the worst in those instances, but every descrip-

tion of land, some of it not far from a principal market. The first he would mention was in the district of Clare, in Suffolk, two miles from a principal market, and sixteen miles from a seaport—the Tilbury Lodge Farm, farmed on the four-year course of husbandry, containing 372 acres. The rent to Michaelmas was 13s. 7½d. per acre. The present rent, let for seven years from Michaelmas, 1845, is 23s. per acre. Security given for the rent, and let to a highly respectable man. [A noble Lord: That is a smart rent.] The noble Lord himself probably liked a good rent; if the noble Lord found the banker in the next town security for the man's rent, he would probably think he was not doing the tenant injustice. He had the particulars of a number of other and similar cases; but he would pass on to a very large farm, as well known in Essex and Middlesex as any in the world:—"In the district of Rochford hundred, in Essex, the Rochford-hall Farm, of about 550 acres, let to Michaelmas, 1845, at 32s. 2d. per acre; relet from Michaelmas, 1845, for seven years, at 50s. per acre. Farmed on the 6-year course of husbandry, and titheable. Produce to London market by sea and river. Let to Mr. J. Jaber, a deputy-lieutenant of the county, and farming upwards of 3,000 acres of land." After he (the Earl of Mornington) had let that farm at the rent just stated, about 1,400*l.* a year, another person, equally respectable, came and offered 1,800*l.* a year, which of course could not then be taken. Again, he (the Earl of Mornington) also remodelled an estate of his in Hampshire, and the House should hear the facts: "In the county of Southampton, five miles from Basingstoke, three from Odiham, and fourteen from Reading, about twenty farms, containing about 3,000 acres, on an average, from Michaelmas, 1845, from 18s. to 30s. per acre, relet within a week from the proposed measure of Sir R. Peel in February last for three years at an increased rent of 24 per cent." He had spoken to the farmers on that estate about this measure himself, and they told him they did not care about it. Supposing, then, that he had had no opinion on this question, and had come perfectly new to the consideration of it, (which he could not say he did,) but with a desire, justifiable enough, to support the landed interest and his own interest, so far as was fairly consistent with the promotion of the public welfare; here was a proof of a feel-

ing among tenant-farmers very different from what some noble Lords imagined. He knew of his own knowledge that the farmers were not in the state of alarm that had been represented; he had seen above 200 of them within the last twelve months. A few hours ago he saw the tenant of one of his farms, a most respectable person, and as clever as any man living; he asked that tenant-farmer what he thought of this Bill, and his answer was—"When I go to Mark-lane, as I do every Monday morning, and see the prices of corn, and converse with the merchants and men who have no interest on one side or the other, but who look to trade, and when I am told that there is not the quantity of corn on the other side of the water that is supposed, and that they are beginning to quake for their markets, I begin to think that Sir R. Peel is right after all; but still I am sorry the measure is brought in by Sir R. Peel." There was that feeling among them certainly with regard to this distinguished Minister. But surely if he felt it necessary, not for the sake of his party, but for the good of a third party—the country—to alter his policy, he was in very good company, for Mr. Pitt did the same; and some noble Lords could even recollect the debates when Mr. Pitt was charged just in the same way with breaking his faith. Noble Lords seemed to make the gravest assumption that this measure would be extremely injurious to the tenant-farmers; but where was the proof of it? As for petitions against the measure, he (the Earl of Mornington) knew of some, for instance one from Rayleigh, with which the population of that place had about as much to do as the people of China. If he, or if Lord Petre, were to put an advertisement in the paper, or go among the people and tell them some dreadful event was going to happen, there would be a number of signatures to any petition about averting it very easily obtained. In all the speeches he had heard against the Bill, there was continually the same note struck. There was continually the same exclamation, that this was a breach of faith on the part of Sir R. Peel, and that the tenants would be ruined; but he had not heard one argument in support of such an assertion. The price of corn, which was rising at this moment in Mark-lane, was a proof to the contrary. He had conversed with many auctioneers and persons who dealt in land, and they had assured him that there was no difficulty in selling land.

There could not be a shadow of doubt that the price of land was rising under the new order of things. He had some years ago anticipated the course which the Government was now pursuing, and he believed that this great system of policy would be successful in its results, and would have the effect of laying the foundation of reciprocity on the part of foreign countries. The noble Earl then proceeded to argue that the present policy of the Government had nothing novel in its nature, but was only a recurrence to the policy which had been pursued on former occasions. He believed that they never would arrive at a sound system of commercial intercourse with other States, until foreign countries were prepared to adopt of their own accord a policy analogous to that which this country was now pursuing. Hitherto foreign countries had acted on a policy of prohibition; but a change in public opinion abroad on this subject had now taken place, as might be gathered from the tone of the newspapers, which reflected the public mind on the Continent. The noble Earl concluded by expressing his satisfaction at feeling that the present policy of the Government, which had, as appeared from the instances he had given, proved beneficial to himself, would not be injurious to the interests of the tenant-farmers and the country.

THE EARL OF ABINGDON said, that it was his intention to support the Clause moved by the noble Duke (the Duke of Richmond). He believed that unless the agricultural interest of this country had effectual protection by law, they would, in a short period, become nothing more than paupers. He recollected a conversation which had taken place between Bonaparte and John Bull, and which he might quote as applicable to present circumstances:—

"Says Boney to Johnny, 'I'm coming to Dover;'

Says Johnny to Boney, 'I won't let you come;'

Says Boney to Johnny, 'I will, though, come over;'

Says Johnny to Boney, 'You'll then be over-
come.'"

Now, what the English farmer said was this, that the Prime Minister had come over. He believed that the position of Prime Minister was no sinecure; but there were thousands and thousands of clear-headed men in this country who were perfectly astonished that the Minister should have forsaken that line of policy which they considered natural for him to have pursued; viz., to uphold "the land we

live in," and on which every individual depended for his daily bread. If they were to depend on foreign land, instead of their own, for the staff of life, no man could calculate how soon a great portion of the population of this country might be brought to a state of starvation, for want of work and want of money. He might be a protectionist—a great protectionist—he believed he was an exorbitant protectionist, for at the last agricultural meeting which he had attended he stood stoutly up for protection, and even the very women who were looking in at the windows to see of what sort of materials the farmers were made, participated in the feeling. The farmers of this country had strong constitutions and strong feelings; they felt loyalty and attachment to their Sovereign, and they had an earnest wish to take that course which they thought best for the interests of their country. They were not legislators, but humble petitioners to the Parliament, and they trusted to the wisdom of Parliament not to pass any measure which would bring the foreigner into competition with the highly taxed Englishman in the home market. The petitions which had been laid on their Lordships' Table ought to lead to a fair consideration of one of the most important measures ever brought forward. The measure was important, in reference to the ingenious manner in which it had been brought to their Lordships' House; and it was also a matter of importance for their Lordships to know how to deal with it, and to find out the best way of getting rid of it; for if it passed into law, they would all, and more especially the right rev. Prelates, be like rams caught in a thicket. He was certain that, if it were not for the protection and encouragement of agriculture, there would be no Woolsack to sit upon. He had all his life been a supporter of regular Government upon constitutional principles; but these were days when those principles were to be knocked on the head. Under the system of protection this country had struggled through the greatest difficulties and dangers, and had attained higher prosperity than any other upon the face of the earth. No one could regret more than he did that a Government which appeared to be founded upon protectionist principles should all at once be shattered to pieces by a single man, who, it might have been supposed, would have been wedded to the highest interests of his country. In early life he (Lord Abingdon)

had served his country, not under a modern bishop, but under a respected and gallant dean. When apprehension was entertained of an invasion of this country by the French, the Dean of St. Asaph raised a corps at his own expense, in which he (Lord Abingdon) served as a private, and was afterwards appointed drummer to the band. His next promotion was to the office of Speaker of their Lordships' House, and he had no difficulty in performing the duties of that office. He sat upon the Woolsack and listened attentively to the arguments of noble Lords, and those arguments which were sound were easy of digestion. He had intended to shew their Lordships how closely agriculture was mixed up with military matters; but he feared he was trespassing upon their attention, and he would only say, that he hoped they would concur in this Amendment, which was calculated to prevent the most serious injury to the best interests of this country.

EARL STANHOPE said, the noble Earl (the Earl of Mornington), in referring to the policy of an illustrious relative of his, and an immortal statesman (Mr. Pitt), had mistaken and misrepresented the policy of that illustrious individual. He (Earl Stanhope) had recently perused the speech delivered by Mr. Pitt, when he recommended to the House of Commons the commercial treaty with France. The noble Earl seemed to imagine that this measure was founded on the principle of free trade. Now, with reference to the article of corn, Mr. Pitt had always proved himself a zealous protectionist; for in 1791 he proposed a Corn Bill fixing a higher rate of duty than was now maintained, and he persevered in that policy. The measure of Mr. Pitt was founded on principles of reciprocity; but he would ask whether that was the case with the measures of the present Prime Minister? Why, in 1842, when our protective duties were relaxed, no less than six foreign countries came down upon us with hostile tariffs. With respect to the present Bill, the tenants, unsolicited by the landlords, had got up a spontaneous movement against the measures proposed by Sir R. Peel. It had been said that the agriculturists had no cause for alarm; but he would ask whether, when the protecting duty upon wheat was suddenly reduced from 16s., or 14s. a quarter, to 4s.—as would be the case under this Bill—their alarm was not natural and justifiable? His conviction was, that this measure would be deeply injurious to the farmers, and to all

connected with agriculture. He confessed he had heard with some pain from his noble Friend the President of the Board of Control, the observation that the Amendment proposed by the noble Duke on the cross benches (the Duke of Richmond), who would always deserve the gratitude of the country for the part he had taken on this great question, was objectionable. Now he (Earl Stanhope) considered that if any proposition could be unobjectionable, it was the Amendment of the noble Duke, which was founded upon the principles of eternal and immutable justice. When, by a legislative measure, they changed entirely the relations between the landlord and tenant, in such a manner as to inflict ruin and injury upon one party, while the other obtained an advantage to which he had no title, it was obviously the duty of Parliament to interfere, and to prevent such injustice and oppression. It was to be apprehended that injustice and oppression would be the result of this measure, in consequence of the chimerical notions entertained by some parties as to its operation. The idea was entertained in some quarters that this measure would have the effect of raising prices and augmenting rents; and a landlord who held this opinion might suppose that his tenant's objection to be bound by a lease executed under widely different circumstances might arise from ignorance or error, and he might insist upon the observance of the lease, thereby reducing the tenant to ruin and beggary. The object of the Amendment was to prevent such oppression and injustice, and to assert the sacred and eternal principles of even-handed justice; and he called upon their Lordships to give it their assent. He would deny that the introduction of this clause would be attended with any confusion whatever, any more than in the case of an ordinary tenancy at will. He entreated their Lordships not to pass this Bill—which might truly be called a Bill of pains and penalties, an edict of confiscation—without making provision for some compensation to those who would be injured by it. Let the bane and the antidote at least go together, although no antidote could be sufficient to meet all the evils of the measure. He looked upon the vote which their Lordships had come to in favour of this Bill, as the death-warrant of that House, as the entire and final extinction of their legislative functions, and of their very existence as an independent branch of the Legislature. Their Lord-

ships had shown no disposition to retract that vote, and it therefore behoved their Lordships to pause, to hesitate, and to meditate well on the consequences of rejecting the Amendment of his noble Friend, lest the cup of bitterness should be filled to the brim, and and at last overflow.

The EARL OF MORNINGTON explained. He repeated his assertion that Mr. Pitt was a free trader. The Continent of Europe would not reciprocate our overtures of free trade, unless this country proved its sincerity by passing the present measures of the Government. If it were denied that Mr. Pitt himself expressed free-trade opinions, the proverb *noscitur a sociis*, applied to Mr. Huskisson, Lord Grenville, and others of his intimate acquaintances, would give them reason to believe that Mr. Pitt also held those opinions, and that he held them in very good society. He might mention the name of his late most illustrious relative, the Marquess of Wellesley, as having lent its sanction to liberal commercial principles. In a recent publication of his he had urged those principles, and the noble Marquess, in a letter which he would not trouble the House by reading, said he approved of them; he congratulated himself on having given his proxy to his brother (the Duke of Wellington); he said, he agreed with Sir R. Peel and with the Duke of Wellington in the policy they had advocated. The noble Marquess, in that letter, extolled Sir R. Peel as the man of the day, as a man who was born to conduct the affairs of the country, and expressed his conviction that there must be a change in our commercial system. He (the Earl of Mornington) believed that he was supporting Mr. Pitt's policy in voting for the present Bill. He believed he had also supported that policy when he advocated the Reform Bill and Catholic Emancipation. That policy must not be judged by what Mr. Pitt had done during a state of war, but by what he said he would do if he could have maintained peace.

EARL STANHOPE explained. He knew that the Marquess of Wellesley had been the constant companion, the friend, and the colleague of Mr. Pitt; but he could not forget that the noble Marquess had in the latter part of his career adopted a course of policy which Mr. Pitt would have reprobated.

LORD ASHBURTON was not going to follow the noble Earl (the Earl of Mor-

nington) into the discussion which had occupied the House for the last two hours. He wished merely to bring the House back to the question really before them, namely, the Motion of his noble Friend on the cross benches, to allow tenants to vacate their leases, and receive compensation for unexhausted improvements. He confessed that, if the question were pressed to a division, which he hoped it would not because it would spare him from an unpleasant dilemma, he should be inclined to vote against it. He admitted that great injustice would fall upon the tenant if some arrangement of the kind proposed was not come to; but at the same time he feared that its tendency would be to open a door to so many discussions and disputes of a disagreeable kind, as to its mode of execution, that he was not prepared to give it his support. What he would recommend to the noble Duke (the Duke of Richmond) was, to withdraw his Amendment in the meantime, and wait to see the result of the measure of Government, and if the consequences should prove so disastrous as was anticipated, some arrangement of this kind might be proposed next year. He would not say that much suffering would not take place in the meantime; but it was still in their power to come to the relief of the occupying tenant, when they had ascertained the probable extent of his injury. He perfectly agreed with those who thought that three-fourths or nine-tenths of the landlords would do what was right and fair in the circumstances. In fact, they had no interest to do otherwise, because it was no benefit to a landlord to have tenants on his estate who were ruining both themselves and his land; but at the same time he thought that, in the uncertainty of the case, and without an exact measure of their suffering, it would be better to wait till next year to see what the consequences were, when they might then call upon Parliament to interfere and make some arrangement of this kind. Before sitting down, he begged to intimate to the House that he wished to postpone, until the third reading of the Bill, the Resolution of which he had given notice to move on the subject, respecting the necessity of some better provision against the calamity which would be occasioned by the sudden importation of the large quantity of wheat now in bond. In the meantime, he entreated both sides of the House to take the matter into earnest consideration, particularly the

supporters of the Bill, who should take care not to bring discredit upon its immediate operations.

The DUKE OF RICHMOND replied: He was willing to concede that the noble Lord (the Earl of Mornington) might know much more about France than he (the Duke of Richmond) did, but he denied that he knew so much of the opinions of the farmers of Essex. He had seen them frequently, he had met 500 of them not above a fortnight ago, and he knew their opinions of the measure before the House, and he again complained that noble Lords got up in that House, and declared that the farmers were in favour of free trade, when they were nothing of the kind. He would rather take from the farmers themselves what were their opinions, than take from any noble Lord what the farmers felt on the subject. The noble Earl, in order to show the feelings of the farmers on this measure, had quoted a number of farms which had been let; but, it would be observed, that all of them but one had been let at Michaelmas, 1845, before any one had dreamt for a single moment that Sir R. Peel had the slightest intention of changing his opinions, or that, if he did, the House of Lords would sanction such a change. The farmers were an open-hearted, unsuspicious race of men, and they never expected that the House of Lords would turn round like a weathercock and change their opinions at the beck of any Minister, be he who he might. He thought that Sir Robert Peel could never be justified, in the eyes of any body of men, for the conduct he had pursued. Free traders might like the Premier's free-trade measures; but he begged the House to mark his words, they would never be found following Sir R. Peel or placing confidence in him. They might in the meantime back him up, because, if permitted to stay in office, he would be the means of carrying all their measures, for they knew very well that if they could only bring the pressure from without into operation, Sir R. Peel would not have the nerve to withstand it. They might on that ground be induced to like him, but he defied them to respect him. He was sorry to say that he could not withdraw his Amendment, because he conceived it to be an act of justice, and an act of justice alone. He should not, however, trouble the House, by dividing, because he did not see what advantage there would be in being beaten by a ma-

jority of 33 or 34, or perhaps 40 of their Lordships, and as he did not see any possibility of carrying his clause, he was anxious not further to discredit their Lordships in the eyes of the country.

The EARL OF MORNINGTON explained, that so far from the leases referred to having been executed before the announcement of the free-trade measures, most of them had been executed only the day before yesterday.

On Question, to insert the said Clause, resolved in the negative.

Bill reported.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Monday, June 22, 1846.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL.

LORD ASHBURTON rose, pursuant to notice, to move the following Resolution:—

“That, whatever may be the Alterations which it may be expedient permanently to make in the Laws regulating the Introduction of Foreign Corn, it is the Opinion of this House that the sudden Admission of the large Quantity of Wheat and Wheat Flour now in Bond at a very low Rate of Duty, while the Prices are moderate, and the Prospect of the approaching Harvest is promising, may be productive of great Injury and Injustice to the Cultivators of the Soil of the United Kingdom; and that some better Provision against such a Calamity should be provided than is contained in the Bill now before the House.”

The noble Lord said that he was not about to ask their Lordships to enter into the general question, which had been so often argued, as to the policy of the great change now in progress in our commercial laws, and also in the law relating to the duty on corn. The whole question had been deliberately discussed; and their Lordships had decided against two Amendments that had been moved, by very nearly the same majority in each case. Therefore he felt that if he were again to call on them to enter into the general subject, he would be giving them unnecessary trouble; though, at the same time, he must admit, that if he thought, by pursuing the matter further, he could change their opinions, he would spare no pains or exertion to induce them to do so. But, presuming that the Government were right in their general policy—presuming that the measure itself was right—he wished to call the attention

of the House to the mode in which it was proposed to be carried into effect, to show the want of caution which was manifested in reference to the subject, and to contrast the conduct of the present Government and Parliament in this respect with the conduct of former Governments and Parliaments; he would not say upon similar occasions exactly, because upon no occasion had there ever been before their Lordships a measure of such immense importance as the one now before them. Their Lordships were aware that we had lived under a system of Corn Laws ever since the introduction of civilization into this country, and that now there was to be a total change, an entire abandonment of the system; and the question which he had to propose was, whether, since this was to be the case, some means could not be devised to prevent its immediately effecting the ruin of the great body of the agriculturists of this country? Undoubtedly they were about, in their present course of legislation, to take away the whole of protection—at least at the end of three years—he might even say at once; because the 4s. duty was hardly worth taking notice of; and this they were to do suddenly, and without any precautions that it should fall upon different classes without any immediate shock—without any immediate oscillation of prices; and this, too, contrary to the practice of Parliament in former times, and contrary to the dictates of justice and common sense. He begged the House to look at the state of the case. There was at the present moment a large quantity of foreign corn in bond, ready to be introduced into the market immediately upon the passing of this Bill. Suppose the Bill to pass that House at the end of this week, as in all probability it would do, and to receive the Royal Assent on the Monday or Tuesday following, then the whole of the vast quantity of grain would come immediately into market, to the total paralysation of that market, and to the complete stoppage of all commercial operations. There was, at present, an unprecedented amount of grain in bond: he did not know the exact quantity; but some time ago he knew that there was something like 2,000,000 quarters of wheat. Since that time additional quantities had been pouring into the country from all quarters of the world. The outcry about the anticipated famine had induced everybody connected with the corn trade, whether in the Black Sea, the Baltic, or

America, to scrape together everything in the shape of corn for the purpose of pouring it into our market. The noble Lord at the head of the Board of Trade would probably be able to tell the House the total quantity in bond at the present moment. He (Lord Ashburton) would only say, that, judging from what he saw stated in the daily papers, the quantity must be immense. He had observed, for instance, that in the week before last there had been imported into Liverpool no fewer than 56,000 barrels of flour; and that, from the 3rd to the 9th of June, fifty-one ships laden with grain of one description or another had passed the Sound on their way to the various ports in the United Kingdom; thirty-two of these being laden with wheat, five with barley, twelve with oats, and two with peas. Now, that being the state of the case, he begged their Lordships to look to the little chance there was that this immense supply would at all be wanted. Undoubtedly, if there was a bad harvest—if there was a real deficiency of corn in this country, even this quantity, large as it was, would not be more than might be required, and would not be felt in the price; but if there was a good harvest, which he hoped there would be, then this vast surplus, this load upon the market, so much beyond what was required for consumption, would certainly have a most disastrous effect upon the farmers of this country. During last year, although all other parts of Europe were suffering from want of corn, the prices here were moderate, and the supply regular and steady; and yet the whole amount of corn imported, exclusive of what came from Canada, and which came in under all circumstances, did not amount to more than 80,000 quarters. The average importation for the three preceding years was about 550,000 quarters. Undoubtedly, during some previous years there were large quantities received and wanted. In the years 1839, 1840, 1841, and 1842, the average importation was about 2,400,000; but during the six years ending 1837 it was as low as 104,000 quarters. The quantity at present in bond could not be much short of 2,500,000 quarters; and if the Government must carry out their desperate experiment, they should at least do it with a little more judgment. If we were treating this in a factious manner—as a question affecting Government merely—he would say that the greater the confusion the measure pro-

duced the better. If he wished to see the country disgusted with the experiment, he would say, "Give the Government rope enough;" and, certainly, if they did so, they would not come down to the end of the year without the whole country being convinced of the injustice and absurdity of the law. He now wished to call the attention of the House to what former Parliaments and Governments had done when dealing with much smaller quantities of corn than they had to deal with at present. Former Parliaments and Governments proceeded with great caution. On one occasion, in 1822, when an Act was passed, not to take away protection, but merely to mitigate it, so careful was Mr. Huskisson to prevent the evil consequences which would arise from a large supply of grain being suddenly thrown upon the market, that he caused it to be enacted that the importation of foreign corn should be restricted until prices reached a certain amount. On another occasion, in 1826, when there were only 400,000 quarters of wheat in bond—only one-fifth of the quantity at present in bond—so careful was the Government to prevent any violent oscillation of prices by its introduction, that they made a regulation to let one-third of it in every three months, and also securing a duty of 10s. per quarter. These were the precautions which were taken by a former Government when dealing with cases of much less importance than the one which the present Government was dealing with, without adopting any precautions whatever. Was there any difficulty in making some arrangement of the same description in this case? The Government displayed a great amount of feeling for the parties who were shippers of corn; but very little for the people in this country who would be ruined by the inundation of corn which would take place. The resolution he proposed was simply a precautionary measure. On the facts of the case it appeared, that if they let in so great a quantity of corn at once, they would be exposing the country to great and unnecessary risk; therefore he thought their Lordships would not be justified in passing a measure of this kind, regardless of the interests of the persons concerned. He was sensible of the peculiar situation in which the country stood, with one party on the point of going out, and another party ready to step in; but still he could not forbear taking that opportunity of pressing on their Lordships the paramount necessity of legislating on this

occasion with prudence and justice. He had wished to go further into the question than the facts he had stated; he had not aimed at inducing their Lordships to retrace their steps—would to God he could do that!—but he wished to press on their Lordships whether they ought not to interfere so as to conduct this experiment in a better mode than that in which it was at present proposed to conduct it.

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE should abstain, as the noble Lord had done, from entering into the general question, and confine himself strictly to the particular proposition before their Lordships. The noble Lord's speech was dark with alarm and fruitful with prophecy; but any address more at variance with facts and more unsupported by argument it had not been his fortune to hear in that House. His noble Friend endeavoured to convince them that there was now in bond in this country, and likely to be in bond, some enormous and unheard-of amount of foreign corn. It required no great knowledge to have accurate information on this point; but his noble Friend, from not having sufficient information, had greatly exaggerated the amount in stating it at 2,500,000 quarters. By the latest returns transmitted from the Custom-house, the amount certainly did not reach, in wheat and wheat-flour together, 1,900,000 quarters; and so far from any likelihood of its being unduly increased, as far as the information of Government went, the very reverse was the case. From every quarter of the world the same accounts which reached Government during the autumn of last year relative to the expected deficiency in the then approaching harvest, which were afterwards realized by the result, were again arriving. Both this year, and last year, nature seemed to be setting her various elements in conspiracy against us. What he meant was this: it had been repeatedly asserted that there never could be a general deficiency of crops, for that the overflowing harvests of one part of Europe were sure to compensate for the bad crops of the other parts; but in this instance nature herself seemed to have put the elements into conspiracy to deprive us of supplies from all the various sources from whence we could expect to derive them. In the north of Europe there was an alarming deficiency of corn, from the superabundance of wet; in the south there was an equal or greater deficiency, from the ravages of the grub. It was notorious to all the

readers of newspapers, and confirmed by the information which reached Government on all sides, that in Poland and the corn-producing countries of the north of Europe, the people were now in a state, not of want or scarcity merely, but of starvation. It was an equally notorious fact, established, if not by the newspapers, at least by the official information received by Ministers, that in the south of Europe, and in Anatolia, which produced a considerable quantity of corn, they were dying by the road sides. Therefore, if it were a point of importance to have an abundant supply of food, he was justified in repeating that nature was setting herself in array against us, to afflict us with a deficiency. The noble Lord had endeavoured to lead their Lordships to suppose that under the new law, even if matters did not go farther than they were now, there was a quantity of corn in this country which would be brought into the market such as had never been heard of before; and he had directed their attention to the three years 1843, 1844, and 1845, to show the small quantity introduced at that time. Why his noble Friend took those three years, and stopped there, he knew not, unless it were because *numero Deus impare gaudet*. Would the House permit him to state one or two other years immediately preceding those years? In 1844 there were 400,000 quarters; in 1843, 814,000 quarters; but whereas there were now in bond 1,900,000 quarters of wheat and wheat flour, there were admitted in four weeks of 1842, under the law which at present existed, 2,180,000 quarters, varying from 64s. to 61s. 7d. In 1841, again, there were admitted 2,017,000 quarters. So much with respect to the quantity about to be introduced, and the proportion it bore to the amount introduced in former years. But he denied that Her Majesty's Ministers were open to the imputations cast upon them by the noble Lord, or that they deserved to be blamed for any want of precaution. When his noble Friend said that Government were proceeding indiscreetly, and that something or other should be done which would let this immense amount of corn into the market gradually, he had forgotten that Government did make such an attempt, not last week or the week before, but more than a quarter of a year ago, when the quantity of corn in bond was considerably less than now. The right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government then proposed that the same rule

should be applied to ensure a gradual admission of the corn as was customarily applied in the case of merchandise and of other articles in bond; their Lordships were aware that it was the invariable practice, on the passing of a resolution for making an alteration of duty in the other House of Parliament, that a Treasury Order was issued, by which goods were permitted to be taken out at the reduced duty, bond being given by the importers for the payment of the difference between the duty paid at the time of sale and the old duty, if the measure should not pass. In answer to a question put to him, his right hon. Friend the First Lord of the Treasury stated that it was his intention to apply that rule to corn as well as to other articles imported. To this declaration great exceptions were taken, and strong objections made, on constitutional as well as other grounds. His right hon. Friend, therefore, at once withdrew the proposal; and the noble Lord, the late Secretary for the Colonies, in his speech the other night gave him credit for having done so. He said, therefore, that things had taken the course which his noble Friend now blamed them for having neglected; and it was only in deference to precedent, and the manifestation of sentiment in that and the other House, that the proposal was withdrawn. He must say, therefore, that it was wholly incorrect to say that the Government had been inconsiderate with respect to the gradual working of the measure. With regard to the resolution now moved, he should endeavour to persuade their Lordships not to agree to it, because he believed it to be unjust in principle; and so far from having a beneficial effect, that it would be most injurious in its operation to those whom it was intended to benefit. His noble Friend helped them to no solution of the difficulty he presented to them; and he had a right to ask his noble Friend how he would propose to deal with this question? The resolution declared that corn in bond should not be admitted except on some other terms than at present. What were those terms to be? If they affirmed the resolution as it stood, they would attempt a most glaring act of injustice towards those who were possessors of the stock in bond. The corn now in bond would be dealt with in one way, while the corn which arrived next week would escape the resolution, and be admitted as provided by the new Bill. His

noble Friend had altered the resolution, which, as it at first stood, was a mercantile monster in phraseology, for it talked of the "importation" of corn in bond. The resolution as it now stood ran, "that the sudden admission of the large amount of wheat now in bond," &c. Now, at whatever point the noble Lord would propose to introduce a check, a line of distinction would be established, and great injustice done to those on the one side as compared with those on the other. It was a matter palpable and glaring to all, that the resolution was directly in the teeth of the warehousing system. They had taken great pains to establish that system; and on the very first occasion of its coming into active operation, would they consent to inflict a discouragement on it by a measure of encouragement to the foreign dealer? This proposal would place corn in bond at a disadvantage, as compared with that lying in warehouses on the other side of the water. If the noble Lord proposed to admit no corn till the price reached 60s., which was probably what he intended, this was neither a fixed duty nor a sliding-scale, but absolute prohibition; and every Member who had ever voted to admit corn upon any terms, must vote against it, to be consistent. The resolution, as regarded those who had lately imported corn, would be an *ex post facto* law of the most unjust kind; for while, by the law of 1842, the holders might bring it into market at whatever price they thought fit, if it were for their interest, this resolution would interdict them till corn should reach the certain fixed price of 60s. They would therefore, if they adopted this resolution, be departing from the law of 1842, as well as from the principle of the warehousing system, and from the principles that ought to guide commercial transactions generally. There was no resemblance between the case of 1826 and the present; in that year a large quantity was admitted to meet a prospect of scarcity, admission being prohibited till the corn reached a very high price. He submitted, also, that they would not be doing a favour to those in whose favour this resolution was intended to operate. He asserted, on the authority of those who were practically acquainted with the subject, that whatever effect might be exercised by the amount of corn now in bond on the price of the article, that effect had been produced long since. To every man engaged in those transactions, it was notorious that the whole of the transac-

tions in the corn trade, external and internal, had been carried on with reference to the stock in bond. It was said, and in his opinion with much truth, that in mercantile matters, if you desired to make a change, it should be effected at once and with as much completeness as possible; and he very much doubted whether the most expedient course would not be that the change in the duties on corn should be made at once; but you could not deal with those matters on their merits alone, and while it might have been more beneficial to admit the full supply at once, yet looking to the possibility of exciting fears, and a recurrence to the panic of 1842, he believed it was better to abstain from a sudden alteration, and allow the abolition of duties to come into gradual operation. He was most sincerely convinced that the very worst thing you could do for those likely to be affected by the change would be to hang up the matter in suspense; a suspension of supply was infinitely more mischievous than the admission of any supply, however abundant. To give an instance of the effects to which he alluded, he would refer to what had occurred in the silk trade. When the duties were reduced there had been general apprehensions of an over-supply; the prices consequently fell exceedingly low. But subsequently, when the supply actually had come in, the prices rose, inasmuch as all the mischief which could be done had been effected before its arrival. He had no doubt but that the same result would be produced in regard to the Corn Bill. The present resolution, if approved of by their Lordships, would inflict a great injustice on the dealers in corn, and would not only have an injurious effect on them, but would utterly fail, as he maintained, to produce that benefit to the cultivators of the soil which the noble Lord intended it should effect. All the transactions in corn which had produced the present prices, had been carried on on the understanding that this Bill would pass into a law. For these reasons—because he believed the full effect of the expected supply had been already produced—because, under the circumstances, he thought it better to admit the corn now in bond into consumption—he trusted their Lordships, looking to the injustice and probable injury to the corndealers and to other classes which might arise from the suspension of the present Bill, would not give their consent to the resolution moved by the noble Lord.

LORD KINNAIRD said, the noble Lord (Lord Ashburton) had represented him as saying a few nights ago that no corn would come in at all from abroad; but what he had said was, that he did not see that any great quantity could be brought in by anticipation for sale at the prices supposed. He had also stated, and now repeated, that the prospects abroad were anything but satisfactory, and that he knew of cases where corn had been purchased in this country for exportation to Holland. When addressing their Lordships the other night, he stated that the price of grain had risen 4s. and was still rising. Accordingly, he found that the *Mark Lane Express* of that very day said—

“There was, as compared with last Monday’s supply, a slight increase in the quantity of wheat exhibited at Mark Lane this morning. Still the show on the Essex, Kent, and Suffolk stands was decidedly small, nor was there much fresh up from more distant counties. The millers being sadly in want of fresh wheat took off the best qualities at rather higher terms.”

Thus they would see that the supply was rather short.

EARL GREY trusted that their Lordships would not consent to the resolution, without some explanation from the noble Mover as to its practical consequences. His noble Friend opposite had already pointed out the objections to the measure; but what effect, he asked, would the success of the resolution have? Supposing it to be carried, still the Corn Importation Bill remained on their Lordships’ Minutes as appointed for a third reading. Did the noble Lord think if the House adopted his resolution, that he could come down to the House and say, that having agreed to that resolution, of course they could not agree to the third reading? Or was his resolution a roundabout and indirect way of throwing over that Bill? [LORD ASHBURTON: No, no!] His noble Friend said it was not. Then, what would be the consequence of it, if their Lordships were to pass the resolution that night, and tomorrow they were to pass the Corn Bill? Why, the resolution was useless—it was worse than useless, because it intimated to the corn importers that if they did not take care, and if the noble Lord had his will, some measure would be introduced to check the introduction of corn; they therefore would not lose a moment in entering the whole quantity at their disposal for consumption; so that the noble Lord, by his resolution, would defeat the intention of procuring a gradual admission of foreign

corn into this country, and produce a totally opposite effect. It was impossible, then, his noble Friend could mean to carry the resolution, and pass the Bill to-morrow; so that he was bound to assume it was an indirect way of throwing out that Bill; for, to postpone that measure indefinitely was, in effect, to throw it out. He supposed the noble Lord meant to suspend the Bill till some other measure could come up from the House of Commons, in accordance with the terms of his resolution; but he thought it would be more manly to propose an Amendment to the Bill. Either the proposal of his noble Friend was altogether useless, or it was an indirect, irregular, and most objectionable measure, calling upon that House to postpone or reject the Bill. It was impossible to escape from this dilemma. If he intended to throw the Bill overboard, let him move his Amendment on the third reading of the Bill; but after the House had in every stage of the Bill, and on three separate divisions, rejected all the Amendments which had been brought forward—when the country was calculating that this measure was about to pass at once—he hoped the noble Lord would not prevail on the House to follow him in such an indirect, unusual, irregular, and most objectionable course as that suggested by the Motion before the House, to which he trusted it was their Lordships’ feeling that it was quite impossible to consent.

LORD REDESDALE was certain his noble Friend had no intention to throw out the Bill indirectly, and it was just because he had no intention to do so that he had adopted his present course. If his noble Friend had taken the course suggested by the noble Earl opposite (Earl Grey) and had proposed his resolution as an Amendment on the Bill, its success might have been ruinous to that measure; whereas the Bill would stand perfectly secure if the resolution was passed in its present shape. The noble Earl (Earl Dalhousie) had not stated fairly the manner in which his noble Friend had suggested that his resolution should be carried out. His noble Friend had referred to what was done by Mr. Huskisson as to the introduction of foreign corn under a particular measure; and though, as the noble Earl said, the cases were different, they were only different on this ground, that there was less danger when Mr. Huskisson proposed his plan, than on the present occasion. Mr. Huskisson introduced corn to meet a scarcity and

high prices; but it was now proposed to introduce a large amount of corn when prices were low, and when there was no prospect of scarcity. Though the prices had been rising for the last few days, it was doubtful whether that rise was not confined to Mark Lane, and was altogether a fictitious advance in the price. The present measure would be hurtful to the producers of grain. He should like to know on the faith of what law the farmers had sown their grain, and under the existence of what law they had made their sales: was it in the belief that a large introduction of grain was to be admitted? Surely they never had contemplated such a law as the present, nor could they have contemplated it, and it would be unfair not to adopt some measure to relieve them from a sudden and unexpected pressure.

The EARL OF ELLENBOROUGH said, that while some of their Lordships entertained apprehensions that much detriment would ensue from the present Bill, and others had the conviction that it would produce great benefit to the country, he had not as yet heard any noble Lord, but his noble Friend who had so lately addressed them, who did not deprecate delay. The Motion of his noble Friend was, in effect, to produce delay to the great question before the House; and he proposed their Lordships should stop the measure until they saw what the House of Commons would do with the resolution. But the noble Lord had given them no intimation of the precise mode in which he proposed to carry his resolution into effect. He quite agreed too with his noble Friend the President of the Board of Trade, that any effect which the apprehension of a great supply would be calculated to produce, had been already occasioned by the quantity of corn in bond. It was altogether a mistake to suppose that because a certain quantity of corn was in bond, and could be brought forward on any particular day, it was therefore sure to be all brought into the market on that day; and the prices would not depend on the quantity of corn which was saleable, but on the quantity which was absolutely sold. Was the produce of the harvest, for example, all brought into the market when it was in a state of readiness for it? He believed that for the first week or two an effect would be produced on the amount and price of corn, as compared with the ordinary quantities and rates, but thought this effect would be rather attributable to the distress of the

holders of corn, who would be compelled to bring it into market. However, he most earnestly trusted that whatever decision their Lordships might come to, they would not consent to any delay to the great measure before their Lordships.

The EARL OF WICKLOW considered that if it was true, as had been stated by the noble Lord, that there was in bond at the present time such a quantity of corn as would tend to lower prices too much, and also the prospect of a large harvest all over Europe, then he would say it was expedient to adopt the resolution; but if, on the contrary, there was not such a large quantity of corn in bond as would affect prices in the way stated, and if the accounts from all parts of Europe led them to anticipate that there would be no great importation of corn, then the necessity for the resolution would fall to the ground. The whole question turned on the matter of fact, and, as his opinion had been much swayed by what had fallen from the noble Earl (Earl Dalhousie), he should vote against the resolution.

LORD ASHBURTON replied, he had not the slightest wish to throw out the Bill, and should indeed hesitate to take any step towards throwing out that measure, seeing the state of their Lordships' mind on the matter. The proposed law would let in at once, and in a mass, a quantity of grain, which no one could say was now wanted; and, in case of good harvest, there would be added to this quantity all against which other countries shut their ports. Here was a danger against which noble Lords ought to protect their fellow subjects.

On Question, House divided — Content 47; Not-Content 70: Majority 23.

CUSTOMS DUTIES BILL.—THE SILK TRADE.

On the Order of the Day for the House being put into Committee being read,

The DUKE OF RICHMOND rose to present a petition from the silk manufacturers and silk weavers of Macclesfield, and said he would state the substance of it, as a part of his case. The petition stated that figured and fancy goods were constantly imported at from 60s. to 70s. a pound. That silk was as much a luxury as sugar, coffee, &c., which had now become necessities of life, and which were highly taxed; and they therefore prayed that this branch of trade should be thought worthy of protection. He had also a petition from the Spitalfields weavers, praying to be heard

by counsel at the bar of the House. Their Lordships must feel how difficult it was for any Member of that House to make himself master of a complicated question of this kind; there were technical terms to be used, and a great deal had to be stated, of which it could not be expected that a Peer requested to present a petition could make himself master, but a learned counsel received full instructions, and could make himself acquainted with every detail. As a proof of this he might mention that the proposed Bill held out the promise of a protection of 15 per cent, whereas the petitioners stated they could prove that on several articles the protection would be but 9 per cent. The petitions from Macclesfield did not say they were opposed to free trade, but that upon inquiry it would be found their trade would be an exception to the general rule. He must confess that he had now no hope as to the Government measures not passing; but if they were prepared to place in jeopardy the landed interest, that was no reason for abandoning the operatives, and he for one should be always as eager to obtain protection for them as for those who dealt in corn. He had always looked on the Corn Laws as the keystone to the arch of protection; but he, for one, should never forsake the domestic industry of the country. Could any man deny that silk was an article of luxury? And who would grudge to pay a little more for such an article, if by doing so he felt he was supporting a large class of the operatives of this country? But he was told that smuggling would be the consequence of retaining the duty, and the same ground was taken as to the spirit duty. Let the Government look after the Custom-house officers, and there would be no fear of smuggling; let not the servile followers of Ministers be alone appointed to situations in our Customs; let the best men be appointed, and he answered for it not half the smuggling which had hitherto been practised would occur. Even now there was little or no smuggling in the maritime districts, because officers of the royal navy were there appointed—men who would disdain to take a bribe. He should ask them to allow the petitioners to call witnesses—not to offer any long obstruction to the passing of this measure, but merely to give them an opportunity of stating their case through counsel. He asked only for what had been granted in the case of municipal corporations of England or Ireland. These men had not the

power of the corporations; but they were entitled to equal respect, for they honourably earned their bread with the sweat of their brow: they had a right to expect, ay, to demand, a fair hearing. The noble Duke then cited a number of instances in which counsel had been heard when a particular class was affected by legislation. There had been great distress among the Spitalfields weavers; but during most trying circumstances, they had borne heavy afflictions with as much credit to themselves as good subjects, as members of a Christian community. He therefore moved, that these petitioners be heard by counsel at the bar.

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE, desiring to echo most sincerely and heartily the testimony of respect which the noble Duke had paid to the character and past conduct of the Spitalfields weavers, and to add a similar testimony to the character of all in the country engaged in the silk manufacture, felt that it was but an ungracious task that he had to discharge, in endeavouring to persuade the House not to accede to this proposal. It was true, that counsel had very frequently been heard at the bar upon various measures under consideration, and heard in Committee on Bills affecting particular trades; but the noble Duke was asking the House to hear counsel for parties interested in a general measure of customs law, whereas in all those precedents the measure was either one affecting one particular trade, for which trade counsel was heard, or it was a Bill regulating that trade, and sometimes in a particular locality only. The latter was the case in 1821 he thought, when there was a Bill for regulating, not the whole silk trade, but that trade in the particular district of Spitalfields. With regard to precedents, too, the House must remember what took place in 1808, when the Earl of Derby presented a petition from Liverpool, submitting that certain clauses in the Orders in Council Bill were injurious to the petitioners' interests, and praying to be heard. To this it was objected that it was contrary to the usages of the House to hear counsel against a Bill for aid and supply. The present Bill, he begged to remind their Lordships, was a Bill for aid and supply. In 1815, with respect to the Corn Bill, the same principle was adopted; and in the present case the House ought not, according to those precedents, to hear counsel with respect to individual or special interests, when a question of general policy was before the House. The present

was a measure of general policy; and if their Lordships were to consent to hear the weavers of Spitalfields by counsel on the present occasion, they could not refuse to hear other parties, and it would be impossible, under those circumstances, to carry on the public business. He trusted the noble Duke would not press the Motion that the petitioners be heard by counsel, because it was not to be supposed that there were not noble Lords in that House perfectly capable of stating the case of the petitioners.

LORD BROUGHTON said, if it was so contrary to principle, so contrary to the forms of their Lordships' House, and so contrary to the usage of Parliament, as his noble Friend had described it, to hear counsel against a Bill, he would be the last to give his vote in favour of it. There was, however, the greatest difficulty in even slightly understanding the details of the question—the petitioners stating that the 15 per cent left by the Bill would be practically only 9 per cent; and therefore he thought that not only would the speech of counsel be of great service in elucidating the facts, but he should not tie down the petitioners' hands so as to preclude the examination even of witnesses. The great question that had been so long before their Lordships was now nearly at an end; but he would do the noble Lords who advocated protection the justice to say, that though human passion was unavoidable in the course of the debates that had ensued upon its introduction, and during its progress through the House, never was there a case of the kind conducted to an issue with greater candour and more fairness than this had been by the noble Lords in question: and though he freely admitted that they had had many temptations to create delay through what occurred in another place, they had nevertheless abandoned their chance without reluctance, to allow the business of the country to be sped onwards. He felt the most unbounded confidence in the assertion of his noble Friend, that the request of the petitioners was not made for the purposes of promoting delay. He differed, no doubt, from his noble Friend in respect to the merits of the general question; but that was no reason why information should be shut out upon it. The petitioners distinctly stated that there were certain points in connexion with their trade, and the effect of the measure upon it, which could not be understood without professional assistance. That

was a reason why their prayer should be granted. It was not a sufficient ground to refuse it because only one out of several trades affected by the Bill sought to be heard: the others might not have the same grounds as they had. With respect to the precedents cited by the noble Earl, he could not conceive how the facts of one case could have been so utterly perverted as were those of the great case of 1808. He had appeared at the bar of the House as counsel in that case, and had not alone spoken against the Orders in Council, but had examined between forty and fifty witnesses during the three weeks it lasted. On that occasion, too, he had argued not only against the particular matter complained of, but against the whole system. He, therefore, marvelled how any one could for a moment have a doubt upon the subject. Counsel was also heard in the case of the Municipal Corporations Bill on the part of particular corporations; and as far as he was concerned, he would freely admit, not without advantage and information. When great alterations were making in the general policy of the country, it would not be wise on the part of their Lordships to press them on to the exclusion of information, on the ground of the necessity of hurrying on the measures proposed. As an enemy to commercial restriction of all kind, and a friend to free trade, he should feel exceedingly grieved at any act of their Lordships which would have the effect of excluding information upon the subject under discussion. If any class of men deserved the kind consideration of the House, it was the numerous, the ingenious, the industrious, and the hard-faring people engaged all their life long in the silk trade. It was a trade the most precarious in its nature, and the most liable to be affected by any change; and no branch of industry was more subject to the visitation of severe distress. He had known them in prosperity, and he had known them in adversity; but he had never known any body of men more patient under privation than they were, and therefore more justly entitled to their Lordships' sympathy. If, therefore, his noble Friend pressed his Motion to a division he should support him; but he trusted that the Government would not reduce him to that necessity, but would accede to it.

THE EARL OF ELLENBOROUGH said, that if the Motion of the noble Duke were adopted by their Lordships, they would be adopting a principle which, if carried into

effect, might prove an obstruction to the transaction of public business in reference to any Bill repealing or imposing duties. If persons on behalf of the silk trade were heard by counsel, there would be no reason why persons on behalf of the linen, cotton, timber, and other trades should not be heard. The noble Duke had said that if their Lordships would allow counsel to address them, he would pledge himself that they would not speak at length. He (the Earl of Ellenborough) feared, however, that those learned Gentlemen would make long speeches; and he had suffered under such inflictions in that House and elsewhere. The noble Duke also proposed that witnesses should be heard; and if the House acceded to his suggestion they might have to hear speeches and evidence, not only with reference to the silk trade, but every other trade which might be affected by this Bill. If this were to be the case, any further legislation on this subject during the present Session would be effectually obstructed. He gave the noble Duke (the Duke of Richmond) full credit for not having thrown obstructions in the way of proceeding with the Corn Bill; but, if they once admitted lawyers to the bar, the noble Duke would have no power to restrain the mischief he would thus have introduced. He (the Earl of Ellenborough) had heard something about precedents; but he thought it more desirable to make good precedents than to follow bad ones; and he was satisfied, if their Lordships sanctioned the noble Duke's proposition, they would establish a principle fatal in many cases to the progress of legislation on the most important matters.

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON: Before you proceed, my Lords, to divide upon this point, I wish to remind your Lordships what the question for your decision is. It is that counsel shall be heard in Committee upon this Bill in favour of the petition of the Spitalfields weavers. Now, I beg your Lordships to recollect, that in Committee you will have to examine and consider the details of the Bill, the schedule of which provides that certain duties shall be levied upon silk goods. Now, my Lords, I beg to recall to your recollection that you cannot, consistently with the common practice, make any alteration in these details in Committee, without an infraction of the settled rules of proceeding which have existed for more than 200 years, as between the two Houses. Your Lordships have been pleased, in your late discussions

in the Committee on the Corn Bill, to adhere strictly to this practice; and you refused to agree to Amendments which, it was admitted, would have the effect of losing the Bill. But the consequence would not be only the losing of the Bill. The consequence of making alterations in Committee in the money clauses of Bills of Supply and of Customs has invariably been, not only the loss of the Bills, but afterwards, in point of fact, entirely to paralyse the proceedings of Parliament. If your Lordships are desirous of avoiding these inconveniences—inconveniences which would be felt by the public, and particularly by your Lordships, most severely—I conclude you would have the same feeling upon this Bill as you displayed upon the Corn Bill—that whatever might be the effect on your Lordships' opinions of the arguments of counsel, you would not consent to make any alteration in the details of the schedules of this Bill, as to the duties upon silk, but that your Lordships would persevere in passing the Bill as it now stands. If your Lordships should consent to hear counsel in Committee against the details of a Bill, the alteration of which may be attended with the greatest possible inconvenience to your Lordships and to the public, by impeding the progress of public business, you will only listen for a considerable time to arguments upon which, you will be sensible at the time, you cannot act, and which will not induce you to make any alterations in the Bill. By this course your Lordships will establish a precedent which may be useless as to yourselves, and most injurious to those who will avail themselves of this precedent, and employ counsel to come here and plead their cause, while your Lordships must know that their arguments can have no avail in inducing you to make any alteration in the details of the measures they object to. What I beg particularly to draw your Lordships' attention to is, that the object of the noble Duke's Motion is to induce you to listen to counsel in Committee on a Bill which levies duties upon customs, and which you cannot alter without infringing the ordinary usages of Parliament.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND said: I had not intended to reply upon this question; but after what has been said by the noble Duke, I must protest against the principle he lays down. If this is to be the constitution of Parliament, I would ask your Lordships whether it is not a mere farce, that we are to be called on here, might

after night, to go through the stages of a Bill, and then, forsooth, we are to be told that we cannot alter it? I contend that these petitioners have a right to be heard at your Lordships' bar. I will not detain your Lordships by saying more on that subject; but I will only add, that if this is to be the course to be pursued by the Government, I hope they will alter your Standing Orders, and that they will determine that the Queen's consent and the Commons' is sufficient to pass a measure. This must be the result, if the argument of the noble Duke is to have any weight in this House. If that argument had been used by a young man who had just come from school, I should have taken no notice of it; but when it comes from my noble Friend, the noble and gallant Duke, I am bound to protest against it, and I shall certainly feel it my duty to take the sense of the House on this Motion.

On Question, House divided; Contents—Present 43; Proxies 31: Total 74. Non-Contents—Present 42; Proxies 36: Total 78. Majority against the Motion 4.

List of the CONTENTS.

Present.	Hastings
DUKES.	Clinton
Richmond	Beaumont
Beaufort	Saltoun
Montrose	Soudes
Newcastle	Boston
MARQUESS.	Southampton
Exeter	Bolton
EARLS.	Redesdale
Airlie	Colchester
Selkirk	Brougham
Orkney	Ashburton
Oxford	
Dartmouth	Proxies.
Stanhope	EARLS.
Pomfret	Shrewsbury
Warwick	Huntingdon
Mansfield	Winchelsea
Carnarvon	Moray
Malinesbury	Seafield
Egmont	Ferrers
Lucan	Tankerville
Nelson	Aylesford
Charleville	Macclesfield
Orford	Mayo
Lonsdale	Longford
Eldon	Glengall
Ranfurlly	Yarborough
VISCOUNTS.	Gainsborough
Strangford	VISCOUNTS.
Gage	Hereford
Doneraile	Arbuthnot
Lake	De Vesel
Combermere	O'Neill
BISHOP.	Sidmouth
Bangor	Exmouth
LORDS.	Canterbury
Stanley	BISHOP.
	St. Asaph

LORDS.

Reay
Willoughby De Broke
Dynevor
Bagot

Grantley
Clonbrock
Alvanley
Gifford
De Snamarez

LORD BROUGHAM expressed his regret at the result of the division, and particularly at the manner in which it had been carried. He should very cheerfully have supported the measure, if his adversaries had had an opportunity of stating their case; as it was, he should tender the measure his support very reluctantly. The question was rather a judicial than a legislative question; and yet it was decided by the votes of persons who were absent—persons who were in Ireland, or on the Continent, or even at Madras. This being a *quasi* judicial question, where parties came before their Lordships craving redress from an apprehended injury, and respectfully and humbly begging to be heard by counsel, who, they said, could give explanations to their Lordships which no person could give without being professionally instructed, those Peers who were present resolved—by a narrow majority, indeed, but still they did resolve—that counsel should be heard. In this state of things some one called for proxies. He was very sorry that such a call should have been made. He was not, of course, at liberty to protest against it; but he knew that some of those who, in obedience to the call, had exercised their undoubted right of producing the proxies, would have been the last to call for proxies themselves. He thought this decision dealt a serious blow on the right of voting by proxy in their Lordships' House. He doubted if proxies would stand such a case as this much longer. If a noble Lord, who was not now alive, had been present (the Marquess of Westminster), how greatly would he have been rejoiced at this proceeding, and justly; for it would have advanced the cause for which he contended—of the abolition of proxies—by half a century. He had no recollection of such a case as this ever happening before, where the proxies of those who were absent overruled and reversed the decision of those who heard the case. There might have been such a case; but, at any rate, this was one of a most grievous and crying nature; because it was a refusal of the petition of parties who petitioned to be heard at their Lordships' bar.

The EARL OF GLENGALL protested against this decision, and on this ground,

that a few years ago he had been placed in a position in the House which rendered it impossible for him to hear the question which was put to the House. After the division, a noble Marquess put it to him, upon his honour, whether he was in the House and heard the question? He replied that he was not; and the same being the case with other noble Lords, their votes were not taken. Now, as he knew that there were noble Peers on this occasion in the same position, he must enter his protest against the decision on that ground.

The MARQUESS OF LANSDOWNE said, as he was the person referred to, he could confirm the statement which the noble Earl had made; and he would add, that no person who was not in the House when the question was put was entitled to vote.

The EARL OF GLENGALL then put the question to the Duke of Buccleuch—on his honour as a Peer, whether he was in his place at the time and heard the question put?

The DUKE OF BUCCLEUCH stated, that he was not only in the House, but that he heard a considerable portion of the noble Duke's (the Duke of Richmond's) reply.

The EARL OF GLENGALL: But was the noble Duke within the House according to the usual interpretation of "the House?" He saw the noble Duke enter the House along with the Earl of Home, and his impression was that the noble Duke was not within what was usually called the House.

The DUKE OF BUCCLEUCH: If you come to the strict meaning of the House—[*Loud cries of "Hear, hear!"*] Perhaps noble Lords would be so good as to hear what he had to say before they cheered. He would not be put down by any clamour. If the noble Lord meant to ask him whether he was so many inches—

The EARL OF GLENGALL: I ask the noble Duke—

The DUKE OF BUCCLEUCH: When the noble Lord is in order, I shall answer the question which he has put; but I will not state my answer in any other words than those in which I choose to state it, and not in the words of others. I have to state that whether I was actually in front of what is technically called the Woolsack, or in any other place, I cannot at this moment recollect; but I know that according to all the rules observed in your Lordships' House with respect to Peers being present

at debates, I was actually within the House, though I was not in my seat at the moment. I heard the question distinctly put from the Woolsack; and I was standing in the House with my noble relative who has just been alluded to, though I was present some time before he entered the House.

The EARL OF GLENGALL disclaimed any intention of personal discourtesy to the noble Duke; and he would leave it to their Lordships to say whether the noble Duke was sufficiently in the House at the time to entitle him to vote.

The LORD CHANCELLOR thought that if a Peer was within the four walls of the House at the time a question was put, he was entitled to vote.

The EARL OF GLENGALL would now put the same question to the Earl of Home, and ask him, upon his honour, whether he was in the House, and heard the question put?

The EARL OF HOME had no hesitation in saying that he was in the House, that he heard the question, and that he had been in the House some time before the Duke of Richmond concluded his speech.

LORD REDESDALE confirmed this statement, as he saw both noble Lords in the House before the question was put. The only observation which he was disposed to make on this extraordinary discussion was, that the majority of those who were present in the House were anxious to hear counsel on the subject, but were prevented from doing so by those who were not present, and who did not care whether counsel were heard or not.

The EARL OF WICKLOW said, the noble and learned Lord opposite (Brougham) expressed his belief that this was the only occasion where a Motion had been overruled by the votes of those who were absent. Now he might remind his noble and learned Friend that when he sat on the woolsack, he (the Earl of Wicklow) brought forward a Motion on the subject of Irish Education, which he carried by a majority of those present; but the Motion was overruled by the Government of which the noble and learned Lord was a member calling for proxies. He must say, that though he had voted against the Motion, he thought this was an injudicious use of proxies. He did what he could do to prevent their abuse; and he wished he could see some noble Peer of weight and experience, rise to propose their abolition altogether; and in these reforming times, he did think that

a few more such injudicious uses of proxies on the part of their Lordships, would lead to their abolition altogether.

EARL GREY entirely agreed with the noble Earl, that they could hardly adopt a more judicious course than to abolish the use of proxies; and if the noble Earl would make such a proposition, he could ensure him of his hearty support. But while proxies existed, he thought parties were entitled to use them. His noble and learned Friend had called this a judicial question. Why he might as well have called it a geographical question, or a geological question, or a grammatical question—for it had no more resemblance to a judicial question than any other which came before their Lordships.

LORD BROUGHAM explained that he did not call it a judicial but a *quasi* judicial question.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND was bound to submit to a majority of their Lordships, though he was afraid the decision would greatly lower them in the eyes of the country, who would feel their decision to be injurious because it was unjust. All he could now say was, that it was out of his power then to enter upon the case of the silk weavers, and, therefore, at whatever time it might come on, he should move that it be postponed till he had made himself in some degree master of the case. All he could now do would be to read the brief which had been given to a learned Serjeant, who would not have taken up half the time which he (the Duke of Richmond) would do; but he was resolved that their Lordships should hear the whole truth.

LORD STANLEY: My Lords, I do not rise to complain of this decision, but simply to say, that if ever there was a question where the voice of those who were present ought to have ruled the decision of your Lordships' House, it is on a question where, with a view to influence the judgments of those who are present, in a matter where persons who are deeply interested appeal to your justice, and desire you to hear what they have to say in an authentic and authoritative manner. Your Lordships who are present, and who have to decide this question in Committee, have decided that you will hear what the petitioners have to say; but your verdict has been overruled by those who are not present, and who cannot be present in Committee; and after you have declared that in your Committee you desire to hear the arguments of the parties interested in this ques-

tion, the names of those who are in other parts of the world have been put in for the purpose of saying, that, in the Committee which they do not mean to attend, you shall not hear the statements which you desire, in order to form your judgment on the question to be submitted to you. My Lords, I cannot conceive a stronger case, especially when you recollect that the object is not to decide either for or against the petitioners; but simply, shall the petitioners be allowed to state the case in a manner which they think most conducive to their interests. But I do not rise to prolong discussion, nor to interpose delay; still less do I object to your Lordships' going into Committee to consider the various articles which are to be brought under your notice. But I think it will tend to the saving of your Lordships' time, if I now, on the question of going into Committee, make a few observations on the general tendency of the Bill, in respect to certain articles enumerated in it, rather than afterwards call your Lordships' attention to these individual articles at the time they respectively come under discussion. My Lords, if I were desirous to find fault with Her Majesty's Government, and to contrast their conduct on this Bill with their conduct on the other Bill, I should have no difficulty in showing that this Bill is utterly inconsistent with the principles of free trade and of condemnation to protection, which my noble Friend, the President of the Board of Trade, pronounced, *ex cathedra*, to be the future rule and principle of Her Majesty's Government. Having taken away all protection from agriculture—that is to say, from corn—you proceed in this Bill to lay down a system of protective duties—duties levied, not for the purposes of revenue, but levied exclusively on the principle and for the purpose of protection. You draw a distinction between the raw material and the finished article, which is a direct encouragement and protection of our native industry—you draw a distinction in every one of the articles in this Bill of a differential duty in favour of the produce of your Colonies—articles in themselves very immaterial; but, so far as the distinction goes, recognising the principle, first, of protection to domestic industry, by exempting the raw material from the duty to which you subject the finished article; and, in the next place, recognising the principle of a differential duty in favour of articles the produce of our Colonies, against articles of

the same kind the produce of foreign countries. It is because I find the principle of protection recognised and upheld in this Bill, that I consent to go into Committee to discuss its provisions in detail. I know it has been calculated and said, that if once you sweep away what noble Lords opposite call the "monopoly of the landowners," you will find them the confederates and coadjutors of those who would attempt to remove protection from all other articles. I hope experience will falsify that prediction. I hope the landowners and the agricultural interest will not consent so far to stultify the cause in which they have been engaged—a cause in which, let me tell you, they are still engaged—a cause in which they will continue to be engaged—as to say, that because you may succeed in taking away from them that protection which they have hitherto enjoyed—they will spitefully extend to others a principle, the application of which they say, as regards agriculture, is unjust. To act on such motives, would be acting in a spiteful mood, visiting upon others those injuries which they have themselves experienced. I say, my Lords, we have not abandoned, and that we do not mean to abandon, the principle of protection to the domestic industry of this country; and I am much mistaken if many years elapse before we have the manufacturing interest of this country thoroughly sensible of the mistake they have committed, and earnestly requesting of the Legislature to give them that protection which they have been so desirous you should withdraw from others. I might object that the principle of protection is not fully and fairly carried out in this measure, but I shall not dwell upon this point. I am anxious to draw the attention of the President of the Board of Trade to some details of the measure in which reductions have been made, which I think I can prove to your Lordships are not consistent with the true interests of this country. But I must again observe, that the principle of protection is recognised in this Bill, and it is therefore only with regard to the details of the measure that I wish to address a few observations to your Lordships. It will be for your Lordships to decide, after you shall have heard the explanation, which I hope will be given on the part of Her Majesty's Government—it will be for your Lordships to decide whether or not you are satisfied that they have made out a case, either on the principle of protection

or on principle of revenue, for the alteration of duties which they propose. I did not expect this Motion to come on to-night, and I regret I have not had an opportunity of referring to some Papers which have been recently laid upon your Lordships' Table. I am about to deal with this measure chiefly on the score of revenue, for I beg your Lordships to observe that you have at this moment a calculation of only a very small surplus revenue, even with things as they are, for the service of the current year; and if the calculations respecting the revenue which I have made are accurate, (and I have taken every pains they should be so,) those who are in office this time twelvemonths, whoever they may be, will be in great danger of experiencing a deficiency in the revenue. Yet, my Lords, it is under these circumstances that the Government think it wise and politic to introduce a Bill for the purpose of reducing or repealing the duties on numerous most important articles, which last year produced to the revenue 2,739,187*l.*; and in this reduction you only take credit for a diminution of 357,000*l.* on the article of corn—an amount much lower, I believe, than the average of late years. Then there are articles on which duties are to be altogether repealed, to the amount of 55,879*l.* It is proposed that we shall reduce by one-half the existing duties on articles which produce a revenue of 2,326,000*l.*; and, with the exception of such a portion of that revenue as may be made up by an increase of consumption, the loss to the revenue on those articles alone will be, according to the calculation I have made, no less than 1,338,000*l.*; to which, if you add 400,000*l.* for corn, you will have a positive loss of revenue under the operation of this measure to the amount of more than 1,738,000*l.* I am aware that a certain increase in the consumption will make up a part of the loss; but that there will be a serious defalcation of revenue arising from the reductions proposed by this Bill, will readily be admitted on the part of the Government themselves. That there will not be a very serious defalcation of revenue, has not even been contended for by the Government. Now, I believe that, if there be one financial maxim more universally recognised than another, and which is perfectly consistent with sound sense, it is this, that the articles which a Government should select for a reduction of duty should not be those which were yielding a progressively increasing revenue; for thereby you are

not only depriving yourself of large and profitable resources, but you are doing that which is not needed; for the progressive increase of duty shows that the duty already existing does neither press in an undue degree upon the consumer at home, nor restrain the foreigner from entering into competition with the home producers. Therefore, I say, in whatever way you regard it, there is no political reason for the abolition of such a duty. Now, tried by this test, let me take a few of the articles in the Tariff. I will take the duty upon butter and upon cheese. In 1842, in the general revision of the Tariff, the duty upon those articles was left unaltered. Does it appear that, in consequence of the duties upon butter and cheese, the imports of these articles have fallen off very considerably? If such appears to be the fact, then a *prima facie* case is made out that there is an undue exclusion of these articles from entering into competition with our domestic produce. But if on the other hand it can be shown that so far from there being a decline, there is a positive and progressive increase in the imports, then I say the charge of monopoly and undue exclusion falls to the ground. But let us go to the figures. In 1843, immediately after the passing of the late Tariff, the duty levied on butter was 151,953*l.*; in 1844, 186,000*l.*; in 1845, 247,000*l.* Now with respect to cheese: in 1843, the duty levied on this article amounted to 91,000*l.*; in 1844, to 117,000*l.*; in 1845, to 141,000*l.* On these two articles, therefore, you realized in 1843 a revenue amounting to 243,000*l.*; yet under the pressure of this duty the revenue upon them in 1845 increased from 243,000*l.* to the sum of 389,000*l.* I must, then, ask what ground you have, either on the score of revenue or of an undue pressure on the foreign producer, for the reduction of duty on these articles which is now proposed, and for making the large sacrifice of revenue to which that reduction would necessarily lead? Again, let us look at the case of live animals, on the importation of which a moderate duty was imposed in the year 1842. Has that duty excluded them from our markets? You did not expect that they would be largely imported; and I do not say that I apprehend any serious competition in those animals from the foreign producer. The amount of the duty on live animals in 1843 was 1,500*l.*, in 1844 it was 5,300*l.*, and in 1845 it was 18,500*l.*

What ground, then, is there for depriving your revenue of the moderate amount derived from that source, and putting it into the pockets of the foreign producer?—for that I believe will be the effect of the proposed change. Again, let us look at the silk duties. I believe that our exports of silk goods have been of late years nearly stationary. I do not mean to say that our exports were not more this year than last year; but I mean to say that if you look to the Papers laid on the Table by Her Majesty's Government, at an early period of this Session, you will find that in the course of the last ten or fifteen years the exportation of British silk manufactured goods has not made any considerable progress. I believe even that there were three or four years, some six years ago, in which the exportation of British silk goods was greater than it is at the present moment. But in the meantime the importation of foreign silk goods has very largely increased under the existing duties. In the year 1843 the amount of duty on foreign silk goods was 241,000*l.*; in 1844 it was 286,000*l.*; and in 1845 it was 323,000*l.* Thus your Lordships see there has been a large increase in the importation of the foreign article; and a revenue was derived from it, with no loss whatever to the home producer, of 320,000*l.* Yet, in the face of this fact, you are about to lower by one-half the duty on the introduction of foreign silk goods. I ask your Lordships, is not this a wilful and a wanton sacrifice of revenue, without any corresponding good to the British consumer? Now I come to the article timber. In 1842, the duty upon foreign timber was very considerably lowered—it was altogether removed from colonial timber. The effect of this lowering of the duty on Baltic timber has been that since 1842 there has been a very large increase in the amount of Baltic timber brought into consumption in this country. I beg leave to remind your Lordships that this is no trifling article of revenue. In 1843, foreign timber produced 713,000*l.*; in 1844, 916,000*l.*; in 1845, 1,046,000*l.* Is there any proof in this article that the duty pressed unduly on the consumer, or excluded the foreigner? And yet, for no conceivable reason that I can see, my noble Friend proposes to reduce two-fifths of the duty upon foreign timber, which yields, as I have said, 1,046,000*l.* To sum up these articles I have enumerated, which in the aggregate, in 1843, yielded a revenue of

1,199,000*l.*, increased so, that in 1844 they brought in 1,500,000*l.*, and in 1845, 1,770,000*l.*, being an increase of above 600,000*l.* in two years. So that neither for the relief of the consumer at home, or of the producer abroad, you are about to sacrifice 1,777,000*l.* of revenue. I will now pass to articles which, though not very important in themselves, are important inasmuch as they involve the interest of great numbers of our operatives. The next articles I will call your Lordships' attention to are boots and shoes. And here allow me to observe that whatever advantage the consumer derives from the reduction of the duty in this article, that reduction will not in any way operate to the advantage of the lower classes: the advantage will be solely derived by the higher classes—those who are best able to afford the loss of that which the revenue would otherwise gain. Well, but what else will this reduction do? I say, my Lords, it will displace a large quantity of labour—it will throw out of employment a great number of persons who are now usefully engaged in this manufacture. Before the year 1842 the duty on foreign boots was 5*s.* per dozen. You lowered it in 1842 to 1*l.* 9*s.* 4*d.*, and the importation immediately rose from 4,820 pairs in 1842, to 8,353 pairs—I mean of boots—no alteration has taken place since then, and 1*l.* 9*s.* 4*d.* has stood as the duty since 1843. Now, I beg your Lordships to observe that from 4,821 pairs, in 1841, the importation increased to 8,353 in 1842; and from that to 12,220 in 1843; and from 12,220 in 1843 to 13,261 pairs in 1844; and thence to 14,387 in 1845. I repeat that persons in the higher class and best able to pay for luxuries, are the chief buyers of French boots. I declare I am at a loss to conceive upon what grounds the Government have interfered with this article, and propose to reduce the duty from 1*l.* 9*s.* 4*d.* to 1*l.* per dozen. On the article shoes and boots, I spoke only of boots before. There were imported in 1841, 39,000 pairs of shoes, whilst in 1845 there were 82,000 pairs imported. The existing duty, therefore, does not prevent the foreign producer from entering our markets on fair and reasonable terms. There are two other articles to which I wish to refer—I mean stained paper and pillow lace. The duty on the first of these articles was not changed in 1842. The duty on stained paper is now 1*s.* 3-5*d.* per dozen yards. In 1841, there were

imported 13,479 yards, and in 1845 there were imported 30,000 yards. So that there was a progressive increase of the foreign manufacture in our market. Yet we are now called upon to reduce the duty from 1*s.* 3-5*d.* to 2*d.* Now, with regard to pillow lace, I must observe that this is an article which is almost entirely produced by manual labour, and principally by female labour; and as the article is one of luxury, the reduction of the duty can only benefit the rich in this country at the expense of a very humble and helpless class of our operatives. Before 1842, pillow lace was subject to a duty of 30 per cent; but in 1842 the duty of 30 per cent was reduced to a duty of 13*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.* per cent. In the year 1843, under that altered duty, the revenue derived from the importation of pillow lace was 6,486*l.*, and in 1845 it was 12,000*l.*; and yet not content with that large increase, you are now about still further to reduce that duty from 13 to 10 per cent. Now, I do not say that I shall call on your Lordships in Committee to strike all these articles out of the Bill; but I do say that before your Lordships consent to alter the duties on these articles, you ought to have an explanation from Her Majesty's Government of the principle on which they propose these alterations. If Her Majesty's Government can show that under the present law there is not a fair and reasonable competition in these articles between the foreign and the home producer, and that the home producer practically enjoys a monopoly, then I shall not for one moment object to the reduction or even the repeal of these duties. But as it appears that the importation of these articles is every day increasing, and that the competition in them between the foreign and the home producer is every day becoming more and more brisk—I say that your Lordships ought to receive some explanation from Her Majesty's Government before you consent to sacrifice a large amount of revenue, and to give a further encouragement to the foreign producer, which it is obvious he does not require under the present state of things. What are the calculations upon which they intend the revenue shall be recompensed for these deficiencies? I protest, my Lords, I know not how these wants are to be supplied. I have thought it would be more convenient that I should make these observations before going into Committee, in order to give my noble Friend the President of the Board Trade an opportunity of

entering, if he pleases, into an explanation on the part of the Government of the principle on which the Bill is founded; of the calculations into which they have entered; of the results which they anticipate from the measure; and of the reasons which have induced them to sacrifice an amount of revenue which I doubt whether the country can at present safely afford to lose.

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE said, that his noble Friend seemed to think that Her Majesty's Government had introduced that measure as an entire free-trade measure, and had at the same time been guilty of the inconsistency of recognising in the Bill the principle of protection.

LORD STANLEY said, that what he had stated was that there was an inconsistency on the part of the Government in introducing a measure like that in which they recognised the principle of protection after they had renounced that principle in their Corn Bill.

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE said, that the Government did not propose that measure as a measure departing altogether and at once from protection. The principle they desired to follow was that of removing from all articles of food—from all articles of first necessity—all duties whatsoever; while upon all articles which were not of first necessity, but which entered largely into the consumption of our population, they were desirous of reducing the duties as far as considerations of revenue would allow. They did not stop there; but they proposed to reduce the duties on all articles of general clothing. The duties upon the articles of cotton, woollen, and linen manufactures, had been entirely repealed; but the duties on several smaller items had been retained, not for purposes of protecting the larger manufacturers, but the poorer classes of the working people. Further than this the Government had had no other intention than that of reducing the duties not only on all manufactured goods, but also on the raw produce; and they accordingly had proposed to reduce the duties on fully manufactured articles a certain amount, on half manufactured articles a certain amount, and to do away altogether with the duty on the raw material. The duty of 20 per cent. on manufactured goods they proposed to reduce to 10 per cent., and that on half manufactured goods to 5 per cent., while they removed the whole impost from the raw material. They did not propose to throw away at once the principle of protection al-

together; and therefore his noble Friend had no right to accuse them of not fully carrying out the principles of free trade, since they had never professed to do so. But when his noble Friend asked them what was the difference between the raw material and the manufactured article, he asked a question the answer to which was so obvious that it seemed strange it could have been asked by him. Was it not essential to the best interests of the manufacturers of this country that they should have a cheap, and a constant, and good supply of that which would keep them employed, without entering into considerations of revenue on this subject? But with respect to articles in a state of half or whole manufacture, he was prepared to state that this duty of 10 or 5 per cent was a perfectly just one, and defensible on considerations of revenue. The Government were also asked how they proposed to make up the deficiency of revenue likely to result from the carrying out of their present proposition? The noble Lord had stated the computed loss to be about 1,400,000*l.* Now, he was not disposed to question the accuracy of his noble Friend's figures; but the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the other House of Parliament, in alluding to this subject, had estimated the diminution of revenue from these reductions at about only 700,000*l.* But his noble Friend asked them how they proposed to make up this deficiency? They did not hold out any hopes, or at least they gave no guarantee, that the revenue would be made good; but looking to the experience of the past they had every reason to believe that in consequence of the increased consumption of the country, the stimulus given to its commercial resources, and the progressive improvement of its social and manufacturing condition, the revenue would not be lost to the amount stated, but rather be increased. The large reductions of former years, and the increased amount of revenue which followed, gave them every reason to hope that a similar result would again follow. In the year 1842 the entire of the amount of the Excise and Customs duties of this country had amounted to 32,100,000*l.*; while in 1845 they had increased to 33,400,000*l.*, although during that period Customs and Excise duties had been repealed to the amount of not less than 5,100,000*l.* The Government, of course, could not give a guarantee that the revenue would be replaced; but they were fully justified from the experience

of the past in expecting that it would be so. He would then briefly refer to the several articles alluded to by his noble Friend. The first two articles touched upon were those of butter and cheese. He fully admitted the correctness of his noble Friend's statement, that, under the existing duties, the consumption and importation of these two articles were increasing. But the Government could not profess to act upon the principle upon which they were acting, unless they introduced these two articles of butter and cheese into the present proposition, seeing that they were two which entered so largely into the consumption of the poorer classes of the community, and ought to be, therefore, subjected to the same reductions which were intended for other articles of a similar sort. His noble Friend who had just spoken, and indeed other noble Lords who thought and acted with him, seemed to think that the duties on these two articles were of long standing, and that they had been imposed and should be retained for purposes of protection. Now the fact was, that these duties were of modern origin, having been only recently imposed. There had been no duty on butter up to the time of the end of the late war, similar to that which was now imposed on it. On this matter, then, they were doing no more than placing the duty on the article in the same state in which it formerly was. With respect, therefore, to the reduction of the duty on butter and cheese, they were doing no more than carrying out the principle by which they were regulated in the entire of these proceedings, of reducing the duties on such articles as entered largely into the consumption of the poorer classes, and that too without reference to the immediate revenue which they yielded. His noble Friend also had entered into the case of the reduction on the import duties on live cattle. But he at the same time said that he did not entertain any apprehensions as to this going to a dangerous extent. On this point, too, it would be only necessary to say that the Government had been influenced by the same principle as that to which he had already alluded, as being that on which the whole measure of the Government was based. His noble Friend had next taken the silk trade; but as a noble Duke on the cross benches was to bring this case specifically before them in detail, he would abstain from anticipating what might be said on that subject. His noble Friend laid stress upon the increas-

ing imports of this article, and therefore increasing yearly additions to the revenue. Now this was strictly correct; but it did not therefore follow that either the importation or the revenue was increasing as it ought, or as it would do, if there were no smuggling. He would say, however, that with respect to this article the reduction of the duties on silk had not been made so much with reference to the question of protection as to that of revenue. The duty was said to be 30 per cent universally; but, in point of fact, it ranged from that up to about 250 per cent. Now this was an anomalous state of things. Twenty-five years ago, a Committee of that House had taken this subject into consideration, and they had then recommended a duty of 15 per cent to be established instead of that then in existence. To show, however, to what an extent the revenue of this country was defrauded by the system of smuggling carried on in this article, it would be only sufficient to state from authentic and official returns, that from the year 1827 to 1843, the amount of silk goods entered at the Custom-house of France for exportation to this country had been 6,332,000 lbs.; while the amount entered here in England, upon which duty had been paid, was only 3,100,000 lbs., not one half the amount that ought to have come in. These returns, he maintained, fully justified the course which the Government proposed to take with respect to this article—to put a fixed duty of 15 per cent on it, instead of that which was formerly placed on it. He had no doubt they would see in future years a very considerable increase in the importation, to the prevention of the illicit trade, and the great increase of the revenue. His noble Friend, also, had alluded to the increase which had taken place in the importation of foreign timber from 1842 to 1845; and he had accordingly asked why the duties were proposed to be changed on this article? His answer was, that the same principle which had been applied to other articles had been applied to this, the consumption of which had so much increased, and become so much a matter of necessity in this country; and, moreover, it was an article, the consumption of which was closely connected with the consumption of other articles which increased the revenue largely. Having relieved colonial timber of all duty, they had considered it right to reduce the duty on foreign timber to 15s. a load. His noble Friend had next

alluded to the question of boots and shoes. Now the Government had never put this reduction forward as a measure calculated to be beneficial to the poorer classes of the community; they had never put it on grounds either of revenue or protection. It had been done entirely on the equal application of the principle by which they had dealt with all other manufactured goods, as iron and the like; and they did not think it right to exclude manufactured leather from the operation of the same principle. His noble Friend also alluded to the case of stained paper. Now this grievance of the paper stainers, attempted to be put forward by his noble Friend, was the weakest that ever was relied on. At present there was a duty of 1s. a square yard—a duty which he maintained to be monstrous. It was said that the manufacturer here had to compete with the foreigner, under the disadvantage of an excise duty. Now the excise duty in question was only about half a farthing a square yard. He knew of no reason why the paper stainers in this country should not be able to compete with the foreigner at a duty of 2d. It was said by the paper stainers that they had to labour under a disadvantage arising from the superior designs of the French manufacturers. Now he could see no reason why the paper stainers of this country should not rival foreigners in design as well as in those qualities so essential to superiority; and he anticipated great success to result from the exertions which had been made to establish schools of design in this country. The only other article to which the noble Lord had alluded was pillow lace. The noble Lord said that pillow lace was an article in the manufacture of which the poorer classes were engaged, and yet the Government had proposed to reduce the duty. The present was an *ad valorem* duty of 12l. 10s., which it was proposed to reduce to 10l., in order that the workmen employed might be placed on the same footing as those engaged in other branches. He did not pretend that the present measure was one of complete free trade. It was only following up the course which the Government had been pursuing for the last four years, which was the removal of all duties on articles of food and clothing—the reducing of duties on articles that entered largely into the consumption of the people, more especially of the poorer classes—the taking off of all duties whatsoever on raw materials, and the reducing of duties

on manufactured articles to as near as possible an *ad valorem* duty of 10 per cent. That was the principle on which the measure was based, and it was for their Lordships to say whether that principle was sound or not. All he could say was, that, as far as might be, the details of the measure would be found to work out that principle.

EARL STANHOPE thought the noble Lord who had just sat down had overlooked the real gist of the question, which was the effect which the former reductions in the Tariff had had on the productive industry of the country. If their Lordships would only consent to hear evidence at the bar upon that point, they would learn that the effect of former reductions had been to throw numerous bodies of industrious workmen out of employment, and almost to ruin them. It was quite true, as the noble Earl had said, that the measure was not one of complete free trade. It was still a measure of protection—but of diminished protection—of protection diminished without any just cause, and at the expense of the industrious classes of the country. Upon that point they were entitled to every information; and he wished to know from the noble Earl whether he was willing to lay on the Table copies of all remonstrances received by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, and by the Board of Trade, against the reduction of duties now proposed?

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE could not answer for all the remonstrances sent to the First Lord of the Treasury, though he believed that the remonstrances received by him had been communicated to the other Members of Government; but, with regard to those remonstrances which he (the Earl of Dalhousie) had received, he was ready to lay the whole of them on their Lordships' Table; and it would perhaps be satisfactory to the noble Earl to know that it would be an extremely small collection.

EARL STANHOPE said, it would appear that whatever remonstrance there might have been to the Government, it was needless to attempt to petition that House after what they had heard that night. Did he understand the noble Duke to say, that not a single article of the Tariff could be altered according to the constitutional rules of Parliament?

The DUKE OF WELLINGTON said, that their Lordships had not been in the habit of altering, and could not alter, any money clause in a Money Bill. The present being a Money Bill, which specified

certain duties or customs, their Lordships could not, according to the practice of the House, alter those duties or customs.

EARL STANHOPE thought it would be well if they sent the measure back to the Commons, and thus rejected it. For it would now be asked all through the country, "of what use was the House of Lords?" He would say that the essential point to be considered was the effect which the measure would have on the industrious classes. A great deal of hypocritical pretence of care for those classes had been put forward in another place; but he contended that the direct effect of the Bill would be to reduce the value of the productive industry of the labouring classes, for which reduction no compensation would be made by any of its enactments. He was opposed to the measure, because it was another step in the progress of that free trade which he thought could not be carried further without danger, and which, if persisted in, would, he was convinced, lead to the absolute and irremediable destruction of the whole industrial and commercial interests of the country. There was another question which he was desirous of putting to the noble Earl near him.

The DUKE OF WELLINGTON begged to explain. Their Lordships, he begged to remind them, had uniformly recognised the principle of not altering money clauses in Bills of Supply, and that uniform principle had been acknowledged in the discussion on the Bill which had been lately under discussion in that House.

EARL STANHOPE: What Bill?

The DUKE OF WELLINGTON: The Corn Bill; and he begged also to remind their Lordships that they had for 200 years recognised that mode of doing business between the two Houses. He would further beg to remind their Lordships, that the consequences of their altering money clauses in Bills of Supply would be productive of great inconvenience to the country, and would amount, in fact, to a negation and a discontinuance of all the business of Parliament.

The DUKE OF RICHMOND begged to remind the noble Duke that he had himself voted with the noble Duke in opposition to the Corn Bill brought in by Mr. Huskisson in the other House, and which had been thrown out in that House.

EARL STANHOPE resumed: The question he wished to ask the noble Earl was (as we understood the noble Lord)—in what quarter had the Government sought for

advice upon their measures?—who were the parties, not belonging to the Government, with whom they had consulted?—and what opinions had been expressed by them thereon?

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE said, that it certainly was rather amusing to hear the noble Earl thus catechising the Members of Her Majesty's Government, and calling them up one after another to answer questions. On all matters of a public nature, he was quite ready to answer the noble Lord; but when he extended his inquiries so far as to ask who those persons were, not being Members of Her Majesty's Government—who those individuals, other than official, were—who had been consulted by the Government, he might have himself known that it would be a breach of propriety for any Member of the Government to answer him. It would be neither more nor less than shifting the burden of responsibility from the shoulders of Her Majesty's responsible advisers to those of other and inferior persons, who were altogether irresponsible. The measures brought in by the Government had been proposed upon their own responsibility, after a long and anxious investigation, and much inquiry. They pressed them forward upon their own responsibility, and upon their own responsibility they were now offered to their Lordships' consideration.

EARL STANHOPE only wished to know whether Her Majesty's Government had taken the opinion of any impartial, intelligent, and well-informed persons as to these measures? The late Lord Liverpool was in the habit during the war of consulting every day an eminent capitalist. But it was in vain to argue about this Bill any more than the Corn Bill, such a strange conversion of opinion had taken place on both sides of the House. Their Lordships must take the consequences. There would be a general reaction of public opinion; the principle of free trade would become odious even among the manufacturers; and they would be amongst the first to solicit Parliament to restore that system of protection under which the country had so long flourished, and had acquired such prosperity.

The EARL OF RIPON must say, that judging from experience, if eminent merchants had been consulted on this occasion, the result would have been but a collection of contradictory opinions. When the Tariff of 1842 was framed, he and the Vice President of the Board of Trade were oc-

cupied for many weeks in hearing the representations of parties upon various points; and some of the results in those instances would show that the noble Earl (Earl Stanhope) might well doubt the accuracy of his views. Among those who were expecting to be ruined were the glovers of Worcester and Yeovil; and he (the Earl of Ripon) in vain told the deputation from that body, that they were chiefly injured by the then high duty, which made it impossible to prevent smuggling, the truth being that the only way to beat the smuggler was to make the trade unprofitable to him; however, the duty was lowered, and in two or three months one of that very party came to him and stated that he had been over to France, and found upon thorough inquiry that they had been quite wrong. Then there were the persons concerned in the Irish provision trade, one of whom was overheard to say as he left the office, "I wonder how the devil those two gentlemen could know so much about salt pork?" The Tariff certainly did that trade no harm. So with the boot and shoe trade: the experiment was said to be a dangerous one; but the whole quantity of boots that came in last year was 14,000 pairs—a quantity that practically made no difference: there was not less leather used here in the manufacture. Then there was the milling interest: they wanted the duty on flour increased; but, if they were ruined, it must have been in years when there was little or no flour imported at all. Therefore, his (the Earl of Ripon's) experience had led him to receive with great doubt all these prophecies of ruin. If all such prophecies made since he had been in office had been fulfilled, there would not be a single branch of national industry that would not have been ruined.

LORD MONTEAGLE thought the House had a right to hear something from the Government upon a subject to which the noble Lord opposite (Lord Stanley) had alluded—the connexion of the present measures with the question of finance—in what condition they expected the finances of the country to be placed when their measures should be carried? Were they prepared to say that after carrying those measures, they anticipated the possibility of the removal of the property tax? In diminishing to such an extent the indirect taxation of the country, was not Parliament making it a matter of inevitable necessity that that heavy burden, for the first time imposed in

a period of peace—imposed under an emergency of circumstances, and somewhat in consideration of existing difficulties, and for a definite period, could not be removed at the time specified? He was not saying that it might not be wise and just to continue it; but let the fact be understood; let it be known that in gaining a great commercial good, they were entailing financial difficulties upon themselves. There was but a surplus of 70,000*l.*, and that was shown only by altering the mode of taking the Estimates, and estimating the expenditure in some cases, not for the whole of the year, but for a portion only. The increased consumption had been something of an equivalent for the revenue sacrificed in the reduction of duties: but only a quack could connect this large increase of consumption exclusively with that reduction; it was to be traced to the enormous activity in trade; the enormous amount of wages paid to the labouring classes; and unless we could rely upon that as a continuing cause, it was clear that, with the present surplus, we could not expect an easy state of the finances. In short, with the reductions now making, there seemed no escape from a continuance of the property tax. He confessed that he was anxious to see these principles of free trade carried out as rapidly and as fully as circumstances would permit; and he grieved that his noble Friend opposite (Lord Stanley), with his great ability and authority, had put himself at the head of the opposite party. The position taken by his noble Friend might weaken his own power, but it could not impede the course of commercial freedom. His noble Friend had said, that repealing the duties on raw materials, whilst a duty on the importation of the manufactured produce was maintained, involved the principle of protection. That was a great fallacy. Their Lordships were bound to repeal the duty on the raw material; because, if a duty was taken on the raw material, a duty was then laid on in the first instance, which became aggravated as the article passed through all its various stages of manufacture; and the amount received by the Exchequer fell infinitely below the amount paid by the public. That was a reason for a repeal of the duty on the raw material, wholly separate and distinct from any consideration of protection; and a repeal of the duty on the raw material was besides only a matter of justice to our manufacturers, who exported the article in a manufactured state. The

manufacturers of this country required no protection, and demanded none. His noble Friend had, on a former occasion adverted to the evidence of Messrs. Ashworth and Grog, who he observed had told a Committee that they would be exposed to the competition of America. That was true; but what did Mr. Ashworth add? He said that he was not afraid of the Americans in any market of the world; that there was nothing in the position or skill of British manufacturers to make them afraid of any competition; the British manufacturer had the advantage of railways, canals, coal, iron, skill, industry, and of every element necessary to make cheap goods, and he might rather challenge competition than otherwise. The evidence of Mr. Greg was equally conclusive: he said that America, from her water power, might upon her own soil beat the British manufacturers in some articles; but when the capital and skill of the British manufacturers came into operation with respect to the finer goods, they might then beat America in every country in the world, and in her own markets likewise, if she only opened her ports. Under these circumstances, he (Lord Monteaule) thought it was most extraordinary that the evidence of these gentlemen should be appealed to as establishing that the English manufacturer would be under a free system of trade beaten by the foreign manufacturer. He was ready to admit that there were some faults in this Tariff—some very absurd discriminations kept up between colonial trade and foreign trade; but all the advances made in the direction of freedom of commerce, only proved the necessity of proceeding onward steadily and equally. When they repealed the duty on the export of machinery, in respect to which this country was pre-eminent, and when by so doing they exposed the British manufacturers to a more active competition on the part of their foreign rivals, such a step involved in its consequences everything else that had been done in the way of relaxation of duties. He concurred in what had fallen from the noble Earl (Earl Dalhousie) as to the impossibility of checking and preventing smuggling, whatever amount of vigilance might be used, so long as they held out to the smuggler the inducement of high duties. When, with respect to spirits, for instance, they imposed a duty of 22s. a gallon on an article not worth much more than 3s. a gallon, could they hope to prevent smuggling? It was said, that by this

Tariff they were asked to reduce the duties on luxuries, such as carriages, &c. But it was not a fair and just representation of the case to state the reduction of the duty as a mere benefit to the consumer, for whom the foreign article was imported. How was that article paid for? By British labour, which had been employed on every bale of goods and on every portion of British manufactures sent out of the country to pay for the foreign article. Any attempt to talk of these luxuries of the rich as contradistinguished from the labour of the poor, was just one of those fallacies which might answer very well in poetry, or provoke a cheer when sympathy was appealed to; but which, when the real material interests of mankind were gravely and seriously considered, must go for nothing. It was by labour that those luxuries were purchased, and that labour procured wages for our countrymen.

The MARQUESS OF SALISBURY said, that the noble President of the Board of Trade had stated certain things as the result of the Tariff of 1842, which appeared to him (the Marquess of Salisbury) problematical. He could state, that when the Tariff was altered in 1842, American provisions were used by several of the shipowners of Liverpool for provisioning their ships. By way of experiment, they were used for short voyages; but it was found they did not keep, and the crews returned in a wretched state for want of provisions. What did the shipowners then do? They sent out Irish curers to America, and the American provisions were now cured in the same manner as Irish provisions, and were very generally adopted for ships; and, until Irish provisions could be obtained at as cheap a rate as American, there could be no doubt the latter would continue to be used. The milling trade in the neighbourhood of London had also been entirely destroyed by the operation of the Tariff. He thought there could be no doubt, that if they diminished the revenue derived from duties, they must resort to direct taxation; but did their Lordships believe that, at a time like the present, considering also the war which would be commenced throughout the country against a system of direct taxation, they could afford to relinquish the revenue accruing from protective duties? Those duties, in his opinion, had not only been most effectual in producing a good revenue, but also in affording encouragement and protection to British industry. He conceived that the measures of Her Majesty's Go-

vernment were tending very materially to reduce the revenue of the country, and would be injurious to its best interests; and on these grounds he objected to the present Bill.

LORD COLCHESTER said, it had been stated that the diminution of revenue occasioned by the reductions of duty proposed by the Government would be made up by the increased importation and consumption of those articles on which the duty was to be reduced. He had not objected to the Tariff of 1842; but the experiment then tried had not been attended with very favourable results with regard to the increased importations anticipated from a reduction of duties. It was true that there had been an increase, but that increase had not been at all in proportion to the increase under the old Tariff. He took from the Parliamentary returns the following facts:—Our exports were, on an average of the five years preceding 1836, 203,000,000; 1841, 250,000,000; 1846, 268,000,000. So that the increase of five years, under the old Tariff, was 47,000,000; under the new, only 18,000,000. Again, the duties imposed by the Tariff of 1842, averaged 20 per cent on manufactures; now 10 per cent was the average proposed, although the American Secretary of State had recommended 20 per cent, as calculated to produce the greatest amount of revenue.

LORD ASHBURTON said, that the measure now before the House would cause so great a reduction in the revenue, that an income tax, which ought to have been reserved for a period of war, would be rendered indispensable in this country during a time of peace. He believed—though he hoped he might be mistaken—that the theory of perpetual and unwearied prosperity of the country, upon which so much reliance had been placed, was entirely fallacious. He did not concur in the broad and general principle—that discovery which seemed to have been made in the present generation—that free-trade principles ought to be indiscriminately applied. He considered that they might be fatal to the industry of this country, and that our policy might not be reciprocated by other nations. He considered that the only justification for the reduction of duties was when they arrived at such a point that the smuggler came in and deprived the State of its revenue; for he thought it far better that the duty should be reduced, and that the public should obtain the advantage, than that it should be gained by the smuggler. He could not conceive on what

ground it was not considered good policy to raise a revenue upon French cambrics or any other article, so long as they could keep the smuggler out of the market; but it must be remembered that much of the extensive smuggling which had recently taken place had been carried on with the connivance of our Custom-house officers.

The Order of the Day for going into Committee, read.

House in Committee accordingly.

On Clause 2,

LORD STANLEY said: I will not repeat what I have so recently stated on this subject, but I shall content myself with stating that this proposed reduction of the duties on foreign timber appears to me to be absolutely throwing away a considerable portion of revenue. The duties were reduced within the last three years from 55s. to 25s. per load; and colonial timber was reduced at the same time to a mere nominal amount, for the purpose, as it was avowedly declared in 1842, of keeping up some relation between foreign and colonial timber. The consequence was, that while the consumption of colonial timber has increased in a very slight degree, that of foreign timber has increased in a very great degree from 700,000 loads to 1,700,000 loads in last year; and now the House is asked in the present state of the revenue to sacrifice, upon the article of foreign timber, 400,000*l.* out of the million which is now brought in. He thought that no serious injury would be done to any one, but great good to the nation, and therefore he would move that this clause be omitted.

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE said, the noble Lord was under a misapprehension as to the increased import of foreign timber as compared with Canada timber. If he would look to the Papers on the Table, he would find that of hewn timber there was imported from the Baltic in 1841, 136,000 loads; in 1842, 108,000 loads; and in 1845, 282,000 loads. Of deals, in 1843, 229,000 loads; and in 1845, 342,000 loads. On the other hand, a reference to the accounts of the imports of colonial timber would show that in 1841 the import was 619,000 loads; in 1842, 418,000 loads; and in 1845, 797,000 loads. Of deals there were imported, in 1842, 170,000 loads; and in 1845, 498,000 loads. He could not, therefore, understand how the noble Lord could say that there had not been relatively an increase in the import of colonial timber. With regard to the motives which had induced

Her Majesty's Government to propose this reduction of duty, he would not fatigue their Lordships by going into the arguments he had before urged. It was sufficiently shown that the increased import of foreign timber did not prevent the increased import of colonial timber; and as regarded the revenue, all experience in similar cases led to the belief that, notwithstanding the reductions, the increased consumption would ultimately produce at least as much revenue as was received before the change.

EARL STANHOPE observed that the noble Earl had said nothing of the loss of 600,000*l.* of revenue occasioned by the reduction of these duties.

THE EARL OF DALHOUSIE said, he had already admitted the loss to the revenue; but the consumer had received the benefit of it.

THE EARL OF GALLOWAY said, the reduction of duty would be a great boon to the agricultural interest.

On Question, that the Clause stand part of the Bill:—Contents 54; Not-Contents 52: Majority 2.

On Clause 6 being put,

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND rose and said: My Lords, after what has occurred this evening—after the manner in which the petition of the silk weavers has been treated—after calling in proxies to vote on that important question—I cannot think of proceeding with a clause to-night which so materially involves the welfare of the silk trade. I will not be a party to proceeding further with this clause to-night. I do not think I am very unreasonable in asking your Lordships to postpone the discussion upon this clause. I have not had time to prepare the case which I could wish to lay before your Lordships this evening.

THE EARL OF DALHOUSIE said, he had no objection whatever to the postponement of the clause.

The Committee then went through the Bill as far as the Table of Duties.

House resumed, and adjourned.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Tuesday, June 23, 1846.

CUSTOMS DUTIES BILL—COMMITTEE.

Order of the Day for the House to be again in Committee read. House in Committee accordingly. On the schedule of

articles from which the duties are to be removed, or reduced, being read,

THE EARL OF HARDWICKE rose to move, that the articles of Butter and Cheese be struck out of the list. They were important articles; and to remove them from the operation of this Bill, would be an act of justice to the poorer classes of their fellow subjects. In Ireland a large population was dependent upon the produce of small plots of ground; and if they could judge from the immense importation of the article of butter, a large number of persons must be dependent upon, or at least receive great assistance from, the sale of that article. This was one of the articles the duty on which was not altered in 1847; but it was now proposed to reduce it by one half, from 2*l.* to 1*l.* The importation amounted to no less than 1,000,000 cwt*s.* of butter at an average of 80*s.* per cwt.; and they were about to take off 10*s.* per cwt. in the duty. What was the intention of Government? To lower the price of the article for the benefit of the consumer—that was their avowed object; but in regard to this article, the reduction in price would be so very minute, that it would be felt by no one; whilst the remission of 10*s.* duty would take from the poor persons to whom he had alluded in Ireland 500,000*l.* a year. Let them also look at the revenue which it produced: this article of butter produced a revenue in 1843 of 151,903*l.*; in 1844, of 186,667*l.*, and in 1845 of 247,604*l.* It was clear, therefore, that the duty could not be such as to restrict the consumption of the article, because the revenue in those three years had nearly doubled. Therefore, in a financial point of view alone, this remission of duty seemed quite absurd. He did not pretend to understand matters of finance; but he thought that the simple mode of dealing with these questions was to consider whether the revenue was gaining advantage by the duty, and whether the public consumption was not restricted by it; if the revenue gained and the public did not lose, it seemed a peculiar case for the continuance of the duty. He thought it therefore most essential that noble Lords, as protectors of the poorer classes, should refuse to sanction this alteration. There was no reason for it. No case whatever had been made out for the reduction of that particular duty. He would now take the case of cheese, produced in the same manner and under the same circumstances, and that article produced a revenue, in 1843, of 91,656*l.*; in 1844, of

117,272*l.*; and in 1845, of 141,818*l.* So that, taking the aggregate revenue produced by both articles, it would be found to be by no means inconsiderable. He regarded these two articles as important, as a sample of articles producing a great and increasing revenue, and affording a most beneficial protection to the poorer classes, which, therefore, of all articles, ought not, in his opinion, to be retained in the schedule to this Bill. The noble Earl concluded by moving that the articles of butter and cheese should be omitted from the schedule.

THE EARL OF DALHOUSIE said, that he would not contradict the statements of the noble Earl, but would admit that if, in framing this Tariff, Her Majesty's Government had had the revenue only in consideration, these might have been proper articles to omit; but they did not frame the schedule upon a consideration of revenue alone, and on precisely the same grounds on which the noble Earl moved their omission, he thought they ought to be retained, namely, the interests of the poorer classes. The noble Earl had said, that the removal of the duty would not sensibly lower the price to the consumer; then if that were so, how could it injure the poor farmer, the producer? The one observation answered the other. For his own part, he believed that advantage to the consumer would result from the measure; but, consistently with that he thought that no injury would be inflicted on the producer. It was true that the importation was large; but when put side by side with the large produce of the three kingdoms, it was as nothing; it was like a drop in the ocean. Besides, the introduction had always taken place at a time when it would not be injurious to the producer; the introduction had taken place only when a strong demand had arisen, and in the years when the largest prices had been obtained for the article. Nothing but high prices would induce the producers to send it over. He would in support of that statement mention to the House the prices of Irish butter, in the Belfast market, in several years, and the amount of importation in the same years. In 1840, the price was 93*s.* 6*d.* to 97*s.* 4*d.*; the importation 252,000 cwt. In 1841, the price 97*s.* to 90*s.*; the importation, 277,000 cwt. In 1842, the price 83*s.*; the importation, 175,000 cwt. In 1843, the price 76*s.* to 79*s.*; the importation, 151,000 cwt.; and in 1844, the price 77*s.* to 79*s.*; the importation,

185,000 cwt. With respect to cheese, precisely the same result appeared. In 1841, the price of Cheshire cheese was 54*s.* to 68*s.*; the importation, 270,000 cwt. In 1842, the price 49*s.*; the importation, 201,000 cwt. In 1843, the price 46*s.*; the importation, 179,000 cwt.; and, in 1844, the price 52*s.*; the importation, 215,000 cwt. He was justified, therefore, in saying that the importation did not occur at the times when it would be injurious to the producer; and the reason was, that the importation depended on the demand in the great towns and ports; and when, consequently, in the great towns and ports the price of the article was high. Believing that 20*s.* was far too high a duty to be maintained on these articles, and recollecting that a short time after the war, the duty was not 20*s.* but 2*s.* 6*d.*, the Government proposed now to reduce it to 10*s.*, and he hoped their Lordships would not reject the proposal.

LORD STANLEY said, that his noble Friend had argued the case with his usual ingenuity; but he was in this dilemma, from which he could not escape—either the price would be considerably reduced—and then the poor Irish producer would be damaged to the extent of 1,000,000 of cwts. now imported from Ireland—or there would be no reduction of price (which was the position the noble Earl thought it most advisable to argue), and then the measure would have the effect of gratuitously putting into the pocket of the foreign producer about 427,000*l.* a year out of their revenue. It was true, that as compared with the large consumption of the whole country, the importation was not large enough to affect the price of the article throughout the whole country; but then the only difference was, that the producer of foreign butter would put into his pocket the amount which their own revenue lost.

THE EARL OF DALHOUSIE explained that he had not said that the price would not fall; but taking the statement of the noble Earl (Earl Hardwicke), he had said, that if it would not fall, the Irish producer would not suffer.

The House then divided:—Contents 33; Non-Contents 50: Majority 17.

The articles were accordingly retained in the schedule.

On the item for the reduction of Hops being read,

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND argued that this Tariff would impose great hardship upon the English grower of hops. Large

capital had been invested in hop grounds, and as no doubt the hackneyed argument would be used, that the reductions of duty previously made, had not occasioned any large importation, the reply to it was, that it was hardly possible in the case of hops that any large importation could have taken place, because it took three years before a good crop of hops could be produced, and as yet, therefore, the foreign grower had not had time to come into the English market. However, last year, samples had been brought here, and but for the duty would have been sold. The excise duty on hops was 19s. 7d. per cwt., and the tithes, as fixed by the Tithe Commutation Act, were no less than 17s. per acre. It was true that foreign hops would pay the same duty, but they would not pay tithes; and in a parish in Sussex the tithe was 3,000*l.* a year. Besides, the actual expenses of cultivation in England were 42*l.* an acre; that was the amount at which they could cultivate an acre of hops in Kent and Sussex; and yet they were about to call on them, the Kentish and Sussex growers, whose actual expenses were 42*l.* an acre, to compete with the growers in Austria, who produced hops at a cost of 8*l.* per acre. How could they compete with the foreigner under these circumstances? It was a strong case in that view; but he would rather put it on the ground of the enormous employment which it gave to the labouring classes. In Kent there were 23,000 acres of hop plantation, in which capital to the amount of 2,000,000*l.* was sunk, and upon which additional capital to the amount of 900,000*l.* was annually expended in cultivation. A large and increasing labouring population was comfortably supported by means of these plantations; for the sum paid annually for manual labour was 230,000*l.*, which exceeded the usual amount for the same number of acres by 160,000*l.* Under that state of things a large population had grown up, because that branch of agriculture found them constant employment; and now they were about, not only to cripple the resources of those domestic producers, but to leave them burdened with so large an amount of population that they would not be able to employ it in other ways. And there could be no reason for this remission of duty: it could not be the object of the Government to benefit the consumer, for it would make no difference in the price of beer; for, if they wanted cheaper hops, they had only to

take off the excise duties, and he would answer for it that hops would soon be cheaper. What, then, did they propose to do with that large population? Were they going to drive them all into the manufacturing districts, or compel them to emigrate into a foreign land, and leave their native parishes, in which they had hoped to pass their lives? It might be said that the House had already shown its determination not to alter this measure in any respect; but he nevertheless wished the House and the public to know how the case really stood. Upon what principle this article had been introduced, he knew not; the Prime Minister disliked protection to land, though to cotton goods made up he was willing enough to grant protection; and that was the only reason he could conceive for the introduction of hops into this schedule. It seemed to him as if every clerk in the Board of Trade had been told to write down some article, all of which had been put into a hat, and then drawn out promiscuously by the noble Earl.

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE begged to thank his noble Friend for the credit he gave him in regard to the framing of this schedule; he felt complimented by the suggestion of the noble Duke as to the manner in which it had been accomplished. But the noble Duke had asked what they meant to do with the large population dependent on hop plantations; whether they were all to be sent to the manufacturing districts, and how those who had to pay 42*l.* per acre in the first instance, and afterwards other heavy charges, could compete with those who had only to pay 8*l.* an acre? Now he had before stated that upon data such as that relating only to the cost of production, without data as to the other charges of transit and so forth, it was impossible to draw any inference as to the result of such a measure; but so far from agreeing with his noble Friend that the duty was too much reduced by this Bill, he had expected to find the only complaint made that this was one of those anomalous cases in which they had left the duty too high. He would not use the argument that the admission of foreign hops had hitherto been inconsiderable; the admission had been small, but the reason was, that the duty had been as nearly prohibitory as possible. Was there any ground for the apprehensions of the noble Duke? It had been stated elsewhere, that hops could be brought from Belgium at 6*l.* per cwt.; it would then have to pay, not only the

excise duty, but the duty of 2*l.* 5*s.* imposed by this Bill: so that a protection of upwards of 60 per cent. would be left to the home grower, and he thought it impossible to contend that 60 per cent. was not a sufficient protection.

The EARL OF WICKLOW said, that it was a most inconsistent thing on the part of the Government that the excise duty should continue at all, if they meant to carry out their own principles. One of their first provisions should have been to take off the excise duty upon hops, which were the only instance of a growing crop subject to duty. If they did so, the revenue would suffer, it was true; but they were destroying their revenue by every reduction of duty upon all the articles of the Tariff.

The DUKE OF RICHMOND said, he would not divide the House, but begged only to add that a great many plantations had been established on the faith of the existing law; and he wished their Lordships to consider what large sums of money were spent upon those plantations for the manual labour of women and children; the hop picking was like a second harvest, it enabled many poor persons to live in comfort, to save money, and provide for their old age. The noble Earl had said, that the data which he had furnished were not sufficient to enable any one to form a conclusion as to the result of the measure; but before a Government came and asked Parliament to alter a law, they ought at least to be prepared to state what would be the result of the alteration. This was another instance of the necessity of hearing evidence upon these subjects before they decided them.

LORD ASHBURTON said, that it seemed to him that the defence of the noble Earl was, that this remission of duty would be inoperative so far as the admission of foreign hops was concerned—that the duty left would be a complete bar against importation: he (Lord Ashburton) assumed, therefore, that it was not intended to let the foreign grower of hops into competition with our own grower; but if so, why had they made any alteration? Why make the experiment at all? It seemed to him that the whole scope of arguments directed in favour of the intended reduction of duty, was to try how far such reduction could go.

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE denied he had said that the duty retained would be prohibitory, but that he thought a duty of

60 per cent., in point of fact yet payable by the foreign grower, was sufficient to impose for protection.

LORD COLCHESTER remarked, that the reduction of the duty on hops would not only affect the hop grower, but the grower of hop poles. A great deal of underwood was grown for this purpose in Sussex, and much employment was furnished from this source to the agricultural population at a period of the year when agricultural operations were generally suspended.

EARL STANHOPE said, that independently of other considerations, the uncertain nature of the hop growth should be taken into consideration. To show how precarious the trade was, and how much it stood in need of legislative protection, he had heard that a certain hop grower had realized in one year 70,000*l.* by his hops, and this enormous sum was lost in the next season. The expenses also were great. One person had been known to expend a sum of 10,000*l.* annually in labour in hop growing. He might add, before he resumed his seat, that no answer had been given to the questions put by the noble Duke (the Duke of Richmond), as to what were really the intentions and wishes of the Government on these measures.

The EARL OF RIPON observed, that the argument of the noble Earl (Earl Stanhope) was merely to this effect, that the old duty on the article should be retained to keep up a species of gambling—the interests of the consumer were not to be considered, but gambling speculations must be protected.

EARL STANHOPE replied, that the duty on hops was levied upon the amount grown; and, therefore, the noble Earl was in error, when he said that hop growing partook of a gambling transaction.

The DUKE OF RICHMOND must deny the statement made, that the trade of hop growing was one of gambling. Was the growth or purchase of hops of a more speculative nature than dealing in cotton? He would ask the noble Earl (the Earl of Ripon) if he had found the price of beer ever raised by the high price of hops? The interests of the consumer were not injured in that article. In 1841, when a deputation of hop growers waited on the noble Earl, and opposed a reduction of duty, their wishes were heeded to. Why were these duties now to be reduced? He supposed because no application had been made to the noble Earl by a deputation of

the same character. He (the Duke of Richmond) much desired that the poor man should drink his beer at the lowest possible cost to himself; but he did not see that any wild and untenable theory should be introduced for the present purpose or any other. If Government wanted to cheapen the price of beer, let them take off the duty on malt. Ministers wanted to give the people cheap bread and cheese; the next cry would be for cheap beer to drink with it.

EARL FITZWILLIAM had little doubt the next step in the progress of change would be an attempt to supply the country with cheap beer by a reduction of the tax on malt. If this did not follow, it should. He was an advocate for free trade, both through better fiscal relations with foreign countries and freer interchange of home produce at home. Beer was as necessary for the population of the nation as bread; and if the Government at the close of the Session would come down to that House and propose the repeal of the malt tax, he should, indeed, be glad. The present question, though one affecting hops, had yet a wider signification, and was connected with that of a free trade in corn. Surely his noble Friend would admit that. The present question was but subsidiary to a change in the duties affecting foreign corn. If, then, the price of corn was reduced, and the price of hops also, barley should surely be allowed to pass into the hands of the consumer without the intervention of the exciseman.

The EARL OF RADNOR observed, he had been told by a grower of hops, that the trade was itself a species of gambling; and with regard to the large sums said to be paid for wages, no districts were more pauperised than those in which hops were grown.

Amendment negatived.

Upon the item affecting the present duty on Lace,

EARL STANHOPE said, the labourer's wife earned as much at lacemaking in the house as the labourer did at work in the fields; and they were now going to destroy that source of employment by facilitating the introduction of foreign lace. By the last alteration in the Tariff, the value of home made lace had been much reduced; and now the Government seemed to think that the remnant of protection which had been then left to the lacemakers was too much. He should move that the words be struck out of the schedule.

The DUKE OF RICHMOND would oppose the intended reduction. The manufacture of British lace was conducted in cottages, by children and females under the eye of their parents. Destroy this manufacture, and these persons would be forced to Manchester, and other such places, where they would be subject to those miseries known to be inseparable from the cotton districts. If the noble Earl (the Earl of Dalhousie) did alter any clauses of the Bill, this clause affecting lace should be one of them.

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE said, that one would suppose, from the remarks of noble Lords, that something unparalleled was going to be done in the proposal of this reduction of duty; whereas the reduction was only from 12*l.* 10*s.* per cent., *ad valorem*, with the additional 5 per cent., to 10*l.* per cent., simply so as to bring this article in accordance with the rest of those included in the schedule.

LORD STANLEY asked his noble Friend whether he really thought that this alteration from 13*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.*, being the duty of 12*l.* 10*s.*, with the 5*l.* per cent. added, to 10*l.*, would make the smallest appreciable difference in preventing or checking the importation of these articles by illicit means. A very high authority, Mr. Deacon Hume, had told them in 1832, that unless they imposed a higher duty than 25*l.* per cent. *ad valorem*, they need not be apprehensive of smuggling. It appeared there were to be some exceptions from the schedule, and surely if there were, this article ought to be one; for after reducing the duty in 1842 from 30*l.* to 13*l.*, they derived in the following year a revenue of 6,000*l.*; and in 1844 it increased to more than 12,000*l.* Therefore, when they found that by a certain duty there was an increase in the amount paid into the Exchequer, they had good grounds for supposing that the smuggler did not interfere, and that the revenue received the whole duty. The new Tariff, it was said, laid the protection duty as a general principle on foreign manufactured articles at 10 per cent. Many exceptions to that rule existed; and he hoped lace would be one. The noble Lord could not deny that it was an article which chiefly employed women and children—he could not deny that it was an article which young persons manufactured, under the immediate eye of their parent, and yet he said that for the sake of having a row exhibiting the figure 10 from the top to the bottom, he would deprive these poor people of an

amount of protection which had always added much to the revenue, and which had been proved not to interfere with the interests of any class whatever. He (Lord Stanley) could not consent to this exemplification of the case of uniformity on the part of his noble Friend. He could not consent to sacrifice everything that was connected with the interests of these people, for the sake of a Bill that would look pretty on paper. No case had been stated why the present amount of protection should be reduced; and as it was admitted that it was a case relating to an article of luxury, which gave employment to women and children, he asked his noble Friend—and, if he would not agree with him, he would ask the House—to act upon the principle which he had already applied to made-up cotton and woollen goods—that is to say, not to reduce the duties levied on them without sufficient consideration given to the humble, but, to the operatives, not insignificant protection which was now afforded them.

THE EARL OF DALHOUSIE could only echo and repeat to their Lordships the adjuration of his noble Friend, to give to the present case the same amount of protection which they gave to made-up cotton and woollen goods—that was to say, 10 per cent. *ad valorem*. But when his noble Friend said, on the authority of Mr. Deacon Hume, that a duty of 25 per cent. would meet the case of the smuggler, of course he could not venture to impugn so high an authority as applied to former times; but unquestionably that was not the case now, because it was as notorious as the sun in the heavens, that there was no article whatever of foreign produce which could not, for an insurance of 20 per cent., be guaranteed to be delivered in London on the most respectable references to the best bankers.

LORD STANLEY was obliged to his noble Friend for the reference he had just made, because it enabled him to tell him how Mr. Deacon Hume went on in his argument. He admitted all that the noble Earl had said; but he went on to say that the risk of loss on the part of the smuggler was so much greater, that it was always worth the while of the merchant to pay 25 per cent. to the Government rather than 20 per cent. to the smuggler; so that, if the duties were reduced to 25 per cent., the revenue would reap nearly the whole of the benefit. That was the continuation of the argument of Mr. Deacon Hume. As to

the adoption of the same principle in this case that was laid down in the case of made-up cotton and woollen goods, his noble Friend seemed to be still haunted by his love of decimals. When he (Lord Stanley) referred to that case, he did not mean that their Lordships should adopt as the duty that was to be lowered, the figure 10. What he meant to say was this, that as the principle of protection had been admitted in the case of made-up cotton and woollen goods, because they were mainly the produce of the labour of women and children, therefore he called upon his noble Friend to apply, not his figures but his principle to the present case, and to admit that this also was an exceptional case to the ordinary cases that were now before their Lordships.

EARL FITZWILLIAM thought Mr. Deacon Hume could never have said anything so extravagant as that the same amount of per centage would put down the smuggler in every kind of trade, in light and easily concealed goods, as in heavy and bulky articles. Then, with regard to the question immediately before them, he could state as a Northamptonshire man, and as taking a great interest in the morals of the country, he would be bound to say that there was no employment in which any portion of the population was employed, which was less conducive to morality. Nay, he would go farther and say, that there was no employment which was more conducive to immorality on the part of the youthful female population of the country than this trade of lacemaking. It was not carried on exclusively in cottages; in many instances, females of all descriptions were congregated under one roof, at least that was the case in Northamptonshire, and he dared to say it was the same in Buckinghamshire; and the consequence was, that it conduced very much to immorality; and he would take the liberty of adding, that it made a very small addition to the earnings of a family, nay, it rather tended to a diminution of those earnings, because it totally unfitted the female portion of the population for any other employment.

THE EARL OF GALLOWAY thought it was a very grievous thing in this country that parents were so apt, from a spirit of cupidity, to engage their children at very early years in the lace and flowering business, rather than send them to school. He had known girls, seventeen years old, who were totally ignorant of anything else except the manufacture of lace.

The DUKE OF RICHMOND contended, that if these were the sentiments of Earl Fitzwilliam and the Earl of Galloway, they ought to insist upon a total repeal of the duty, and thus put an end to the employment of females in this branch of trade altogether.

The EARL OF GALLOWAY said, that he had been a protectionist; but seeing that those in whom he had placed confidence had changed their opinions, he had looked into the subject more minutely; and the consequence was, that he did not believe the removal of protection would have the effect which was ascribed to it by many Members of their Lordships' House.

Amendment negatived.

On "Paper printed, painted or stained Paper, or Paper-hangings, or Flock-paper,"

EARL STANHOPE moved that the article be omitted from the list.

LORD ASHBURTON also opposed it, and said, all the paper stainers in the metropolis had either given notice that they would reduce the wages of their workmen on the passing of the Bill, or that they would retire from the trade altogether.

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE said, he could only meet that statement with a general denial. Masters might have taken advantage in some instances of this proposed reduction to reduce the wages of their workmen; but he denied that this was the universal practice, still less that the paper stainers were in a body retiring from the trade.

LORD ASHBURTON admitted that perhaps he had been too general in his assertion; but reiterated his opinion that all the finer patterns, all the more tasteful designs, were entirely given up in London. Of this their Lordships might assure themselves from their own observation.

The item agreed to.

On the article Silk,

The DUKE OF RICHMOND expressed the regret he felt that their Lordships had not last night agreed to the proposition which he made, that the silk weavers should be heard by counsel at the bar of their Lordships' House; and he regretted it the more, because he had not had time to look at the brief which had been put into his hands till that night, he having been engaged on a Committee all the morning. The article of silk was one on which the principles of free trade had unfortunately been formerly tried; and he was, therefore, not surprised that the advo-

cates of free trade should not be fond of having this case now referred to; because it had happened that the reduction of the duties in 1824 had caused the ruin of many manufacturers, and had reduced wages to an enormous extent; so that the operatives had now hardly enough to support their families, and yet the master manufacturers had given notice that when this Bill passed, their wages would be reduced still farther. To reconcile their Lordships to the abolition of the corn duty they had been told—most erroneously he knew, but he believed very conscientiously—that prices would be kept up; and in proof of this they were referred to farms in this and that county which were taken at an increased rent, keeping out of view all the time what the landlords had agreed to do for those farms. Now, all he asked was, that the same principle should be applied to silk. Would they say that silk mills were worth nearly as much now as they were before? He had been told that the mill of Messrs. Kay and Co., at Tring, which had been erected at a cost of 30,000*l.*, had been offered to one party at a rent of 200*l.* a year, and being by them rejected, had since been accepted by another party. He understood also that the Messrs. Brocklehurst had lately purchased six mills at one-fifth of their original cost. Then he might state that the beautiful silk mills of Mr. Throttle of Manchester, which were usually exhibited to distinguished strangers visiting that town, had been for some months standing still. But he expected his noble Friend, the President of the Board of Trade, would turn round and say it was impossible to argue from general principles with regard to such an article as silk, which depended so much on fashion. That was to say, that because silk was a fluctuating article, and depending upon fashion, that was a reason, forsooth, for reducing the amount of protection. He should rather consider this to be a reason for maintaining protection. The noble Earl (the Earl of Galloway) who told them he had been a protectionist, but that within the last few weeks he had been so quickly converted, had said that it would be better for their morals if the children employed in the lace cottages in Buckinghamshire were sent to school. But the noble Earl had forgot to tell their Lordships how the parents were to find the means of keeping them at school.

The EARL OF GALLOWAY: By giving them cheap provisions.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND: The noble Lord said, by giving them cheap provisions. What does he mean by cheap provisions?

THE EARL OF GALLOWAY: By making the provisions of this country as much as possible accessible to the working classes at the wages they already have.

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND: There was the fallacy of a new convert. He told them that he would give cheap provisions; and then he (the noble Duke) asked him what he meant by cheap provisions—he let him into the trap, for he knew what he would say—he knew that the noble Lord had talked enough of political economy to talk of cheap bread; but he had forgotten to explain how they were to obtain cheap bread with lower wages. The noble Earl told them of the ignorance of these classes, and to remedy this, he would send them into the cotton factories. There they would get schools, it was true; but he was not sure if he would not prefer the morals instilled into the minds of the young, in the rural villages of Buckinghamshire, to the education they would acquire at Manchester, especially when taken in connection with the scenes the young would witness when out in the streets. These petitioners stated in the first place, that Parliament had altogether mistaken the protection which Parliament intended to give them. Parliament proposed to give them a protection of fifteen per cent.; but it was not fifteen per cent. upon the finer and less common articles, on which in most cases it only amounted to nine per cent. They laughed at the idea of his noble Friend, respecting smugglers; and if their language was strong, he would remind their Lordships that he was not a lawyer, and was, therefore, unskilled in the art of making that language more palatable to their Lordships. They said that the argument of smuggling, proceeded either from sheer folly, or intentional delusion; that it only required a registration of licensed traders, and the publication of the names of those who had in their shops smuggled goods, coupled with a bar to future registration, in order to put a stop to the smuggling of silk; because the silk dealers were not like persons who smuggled gin or tobacco, but were persons who would dread the idea of exposure. The gross annual value of exports of silk manufacture in this country was less by 2,000,000*l.* or 3,000,000*l.* sterling than it was some years ago; and it should be likewise remembered that a great portion of our export of silk to France was

of a very coarse description, whilst none were imported from France but fabrics of a fine quality. A great deal had been said about the salutary effects the measure would have in the prevention of smuggling; but he did not think the present laws against that offence had been used with sufficient stringency or perseverance. He would not then weary their Lordships by further entering into the subject, but must again take leave to express his regret that before a measure so vitally affecting a large, useful, and loyal body of their fellow subjects, had been passed into a law, the prayer of their petition had not been granted, so that they might have had a full opportunity, through counsel, of laying their case before their Lordships' House, in a far clearer and more satisfactory manner than could be otherwise done. For his part, he would take the sense of the House upon the subject whenever it came before it. He would always express his decided conviction that the silk-weavers had been denied a request which he could never think their Lordships would deny to any portion of the loyal operatives of this country. They had been taunted with advocating a prohibitory system: he denied that what they advocated, and would continue to advocate, was a fair and moderate protection to British industry. That principle, he would maintain, not merely in regard to agriculture, but to all classes of his fellow subjects, whether manufacturing or agricultural, for he thought he was thereby best consulting the interests of the Empire.

THE EARL OF DALHOUSIE must object to the proposal of his noble Friend on the cross benches. He must again express his regret that he felt himself obliged to perform so ungracious a task as refusing to hear the silk weavers by counsel; but he resisted the Motion because it would sanction an erroneous principle, and establish a bad precedent—one which would be found most inconvenient to their Lordships, and which, if acted upon, would materially obstruct the course of public business. He must likewise say, he thought there was nothing in the case of the petitioners which any of their Lordships might not state to the House as fully and completely as the petitioners could desire; and, in point of fact, the noble Duke on the cross benches had done so in a manner which must be entirely satisfactory to the petitioners. As regarded the amount of duty, the petitioners alleged that while professedly they levied

a duty of 15 per cent. on foreign manufactured silks, they, in point of fact, only levied a duty of 9 per cent. on many of the articles. He (the Earl of Dalhousie) admitted that might be true in the case of some articles; but it had arisen from the extreme difficulty of levying an equable duty. It had been found impossible to levy an *ad valorem* duty on such articles, because, in order to satisfy the revenue, the packages must be examined separately; a proceeding which would involve immense delay to the revenue officers—delay to the manufacturers, which might be most prejudicial, and not merely that, but the handling and tossing of the fine fabrics would be altogether destructive to them. It had been proposed to levy a duty according to the weight; but this would be unjust, for the highest duty would thus be levied on the heaviest articles, which were also the coarsest and least valuable. Since 1826 a great change had taken place in the value of silks, and the Tariff upon it had been found most unjust, the duty frequently varying from 30 to 250 per cent.; and, in fact, the strongest representations had been made by the ribbon manufacturers to the Board of Trade. They had endeavoured, therefore, as far as possible, to classify the articles, leaving the option of paying the duty either by weight or by value, but fixing on each class an average rate of duty, amounting to 15 per cent. He had reason to believe that this arrangement, which had been extended to ribbons, had proved satisfactory to the parties affected by it; and one reason why he had objected to hearing counsel at the bar was, that statements of minute matters of detail would not enable their Lordships to form a better judgment. In this, as in other cases, the modes of levying the duty were fixed by the knowledge and experience of the officers of the revenue, assisted by persons practically versed, but not interested, in the trades themselves. He believed that the present figures did represent an average duty of 15 per cent. on the articles in the classes to which they were attached. He would pass to the other point of the petition—the past history of the silk trade. The petitioners declared that twenty years ago they had been brought under the operation of a system which gave admission to foreign articles, in a manner that brought ruin on a large portion of their class; and they protested against the Legislature proceeding any

further in the same direction. It would be recollected that exactly the same language was used at the time the change was first proposed. Twenty years ago it was stated that the course of policy about to be entered upon would be entirely destructive of the silk trade; it was said that every one engaged in it would remove his capital from it, and that in two years after the passing of the Act it would be entirely at an end. How were they to judge of the fact whether the trade had been injured by those changes or not? If they found that capital had been withdrawn from it, that silk mills were not employed, that the importation of the raw material had diminished, that the export trade had disappeared, then they might pronounce the prophecies of those persons had been fulfilled. But if they found that the very reverse of all this had been the case—if they found that capital had not been withdrawn from the trade, that the import of the raw material had vastly increased, that the manufacture for the home market had been largely extended, while the export trade, in addition to the home market, had been extended in as great a proportion, then they must allow that the prophecies which had been adduced had proved erroneous, and that the prediction of the ruin of the trade had not been borne out by facts. A paper on the Table of the House gave a return of the raw silk imported from the close of the war to the year 1844. He would not go at length into those figures, which were in all their Lordships' hands, but would make a few observations serving to elucidate his argument. The silk trade might be divided into three heads—he meant that silk which was imported for manufacture. First, the actual raw material as it came from the worm; secondly, the waste, consisting of knubs and husks; and thirdly, the thrown silk, which might be said to have undergone the first process of manufacture. It had been objected that waste, knubs, and husks, ought not to be included in the account; but if labour and ingenuity converted an article before worthless and waste into a fabric by no means inferior to articles formerly produced, they were entitled to the full credit to be derived from that article in computing the aggregate amount of the silk trade carried on. However, he would reject altogether the waste, knubs, and husks from his calculation. He would now estimate the progress of the silk trade by the surest of all tests, the importation of the

raw material to be manufactured. In the ten years from 1814 to 1823, the quantity of raw silk imported was 15,200,000lbs.; in the ten years from 1824 to 1833, independently of these wastes, kaubs, and husks, the quantity imported was 31,556,000lbs. It was in 1824 the great change in the silk trade took place; prohibition of foreign manufactures was entirely removed, and the duty on the raw material was reduced from 5s. 6d. to 1d. per pound, and on thrown silk from 14s. 7d. to 2s. 6d. per pound; yet, so far from the predicted ruin following, in the ten years after this great alteration, the import of the raw material rose from 15,200,000lbs. to 31,500,000lbs. In the next ten years the importation further increased from 31,500,000lbs. to 37,400,000lbs., while the average annual entry of the raw material for home consumption had increased from about 1,500,000lbs. in the ten years preceding the reduction of duty, and under a system of high protection, to upwards of 4,000,000lbs. in 1844. With all these facts then staring their Lordships in the face, was it possible to sanction the allegation of the petitioners, that the alteration of the duties in 1824 had diminished the demand for the home manufactured article, and totally ruined the trade? Such had been the increase in the importation of the raw material; and if their Lordships would contrast its recent progress with its progress during the whole period in which the high system of protection existed, they would be better able to appreciate the force of his argument; because he begged to remind their Lordships that a system of prohibition and protection was by no means invariably maintained up to 1824, because previous to 1765, and for a period approaching to nearly 200 years before, there was only a very moderate duty. Well, it appeared from statistical works that the average annual consumption of the raw material in the three years 1765, 1766, and 1767, when the system of prohibition commenced, was about 360,000lbs., while last year the consumption amounted to no less than 4,021,000lbs. Seeing that the increase in the annual consumption of raw silk which had taken place in the twenty years of relaxed duties had not only been as great, but greater, than the increase which took place in the whole sixty years of prohibition and protection, to the extent of 600,000lbs., was it not impossible to give in their adhesion to the statement that that relaxation of duty had been a

fatal injury to the trade of the silk weaver? He was sure he did not need to attempt, by statistical tables, to convince their Lordships that the consumption of the home manufactured article had greatly increased within the last twenty years. And now he would advert to a point which had been stated by the noble Duke on the cross benches, who said he knew he would be met by the President of the Board of Trade by the statement that the silk trade depended on the fashions; and from that the noble Duke sought to draw an argument that protection ought to be reserved. He (the Earl of Dalhousie) took the very contrary ground. The result of the proceedings of 1824 had entirely overturned that argument. In consequence of the system of prohibition, the cost of the manufactured article previous to 1824 was so high that it was entirely reserved for the richer classes to use it. The consequence was, that, as among the higher classes the changes of fashion were the most frequent and capricious, the alterations in the condition of those engaged in the manufacture were constant and violent. They would find the trade at one time in a flow of the highest possible prosperity, and, all at once, in consequence of a change in the fashions throwing a particular article out of demand, the operatives would be found in a state of entire destitution. But what followed upon the reductions which took place in 1824? Owing to foreign competition and to improved processes of manufacture in this country, the price of the article had been greatly reduced; so that the use of the article, which was formerly restricted to the higher classes, was extended over all classes of the community. Their Lordships were familiar with the fact that it was now as common for a maid servant to wear a silk gown as it was twenty-five years ago to wear a cotton one; and the consequence was, that the trade was not subject to so many fluctuations, and that the employment of those engaged in the manufacture was not subject to so many alterations. He next came to the export trade, in reference to which he would not go into detail, but merely give a summary. He found that the average annual value of manufactured silk during periods of four years, was as follows:—From 1826 to 1830, 289,000l.; 1831 to 1835, 690,000l.; 1836 to 1840, 771,000l.; 1841 to 1844, 709,000l.; and in 1845, 764,000l. All this showed that the silk trade had not been injuriously

affected by the alterations in 1824. He begged to observe, too, that the exports would have been still more largely increased but for the fact that it had been checked by the impossibility of obtaining a sufficient supply of the raw material. It was well known that we had hitherto drawn our supply of the raw material principally from France, Italy, and India alone; but now that we had the China market open to us in addition, he had no doubt that in the course of a very few years there would be a large increase in the import of the raw material, and consequently an increase in the home manufacture, and also in the export trade. A great deal was said on this question about the importation from France; but he begged to remind their Lordships that we actually exported silks to France; and, considering that France was the native country of the raw material itself—that it had taken great pains to keep the raw material to itself—that it was also the native country of manufactured silk—that they had long been, and still were, though he hoped they would not long be, ahead of us and all other nations in beauty of fabric and design—the very fact of our exporting any silk goods at all to France was in itself a triumph, and equivalent to foreign nations exporting coals to Newcastle. Nor was he prepared to admit that we exported merely the coarsest kinds of fabrics. He had it upon the authority of a person extensively engaged in the silk trade, that our exports consisted of different descriptions of silk goods. The noble Duke had not adverted to another argument; but he (Lord Dalhousie) had seen it stated, in newspapers and elsewhere—as a proof of the ruin which had fallen upon the silk manufacture—that the population of Spitalfields had greatly decreased in number since 1824. Admitting that the population of Spitalfields had decreased, he denied that that afforded any proof of the adverse state of the silk manufacture. That story began long ago; and this very reduction of the population was one of the injurious consequences of the system of protection, because it arose originally out of what was known as the Spitalfields Act, the object of which was to fix the rate of wages each man should receive; and these Acts having been found oppressive in their operation by the workmen, who desired to make what they could of their industry, but were prevented by the state of the law

—they naturally emigrated from Spitalfields to other parts of their country, just as people emigrated from this country to countries where they could more profitably apply their labour. Previous to 1824 the silk manufacture was restricted to one or two places; but since then it had extended to Manchester, Norwich, Paisley, Macclesfield, Derby, Leigh, and many other places in the country. Now, with respect to wages. His noble Friend had said that wages had been greatly reduced. But it was not correct to take into account the amount of money paid in wages for particular work done as a proof that wages had been reduced; because where improved machinery, for instance the Jacquard loom, was employed, it admitted of doing a greater quantity of work than could be produced by hand labour; but although the weaver might not receive so much wages for the same quantity of work by machine labour as he would for hand labour, yet from the additional quantity produced in a shorter space of time, the deficiency of wages was thereby made up. Machinery was not, however, in universal application in the manufacture of silk—the great proportion was handloom weaving. And if it were to be taken for granted that where a reduction of wages took place that the trade must be a failing one, they must arrive at the same conclusion in regard to every other weaving trade, more particularly in such trades as handloom weaving was carried on. Their Lordships might recollect that a Commission had been issued a few years ago to inquire into the subject of the handloom weavers; and in the Report which they had returned, it was stated that it was not by foreign competition that wages had been reduced, but by competition amongst the weavers themselves. The handloom weaving was easily learned, and recommended itself more particularly to the workmen from the facilities it afforded them of working in their own houses, where they were entirely independent of the factory regulations. The employment, therefore, was attractive; and in every department of weaving carried on by handloom the competition was enormous. The result was disadvantageous, but was an evil to devise remedies for which had baffled the ingenuity of Parliament; and if a remedy was to be found, that remedy certainly would not consist in the exclusion of foreign competition. Nevertheless, the trade was liable to great scarcity of hands

at times. He would read a few extracts from the Factory Reports returned during the last few years. In 1843, it was stated in the reports of Factory Commissioners that the millowners of Derby could not find hands enough to supply the demand for manufactured goods. In March, 1844, additional mills were built, and additional workmen employed. In 1845, in the silk districts, hands were very scarce; and where children were employed half time, they received as much wages as when formerly obliged to work ten hours. Their Lordships were aware that since the 16th of March last, by means of a Treasury Order, the whole of the articles of silk manufacture since then imported into this kingdom had been admitted under the duties which it was proposed to enact by this Bill; and to show the effect it had had, he would read a return of all the manufactured silks imported into this country during the four corresponding months of 1844, 1845, and 1846. He found that in the four months ending the 5th of May, 1844, there were 127,000 lbs. weight; during the same period of 1845, it was 129,500 lbs.; and in the same period of the present year it was 158,000 lbs., which showed a considerable increase. As to the raw material imported during the same four months of the three years mentioned, it was as follows:—In 1844, 912,000 lbs.; in 1845, 1,617,000 lbs.; in 1846, 1,906,000 lbs.; which showed an increase in the raw material of full 100 per cent. Here at least there was no injury to the silk trade. He would next refer to the case of the throwsters, or people who were engaged in twisting the raw material into thread, who had objected to the introduction of thrown silk into this country at a reduced duty, lest it should prove ruinous to their trade. On foreign thrown silk the duty had been reduced from the year 1824, when it was 14s. 7d., till it had come down to 2s. and 1s. He would wish to inquire by the quantities imported during an average decimal period of years, whether the reduction of duty had had that effect. He found that the average annual importation—

From 1814 to 1823	was 360,000 lbs.
1824 to 1833	387,000 "
1834 to 1844	265,000 "

Therefore, there had been a great diminution of importation. This was under the law of last year, when the duty was very much reduced; now it was entirely repealed, and during the first four months of

the years 1844, 1845, and 1846, the importations of raw and thrown silk were as follows:—

1844	...	Raw Silk	...	912,000 lbs.
—	...	Thrown	...	135,000 "
1845	...	Raw Silk	...	1,600,000 "
—	...	Thrown	...	157,000 "
1846	...	Raw Silk	...	1,906,000 "
—	...	Thrown	...	136,000 "

Which distinctly proved that no injury had been inflicted upon the throwsters by admitting thrown silk at a reduced duty; for whilst the importation of the raw material had enormously increased, the importation of thrown silk had hardly increased at all. Therefore he thought the conclusion was inevitable of the perfect capacity of the trade to compete with the foreigner in thrown silk, as well as in the fabrics of silk. With respect to the state of the parties themselves engaged in the trade under this system, he had taken every pains to obtain information from all parts of the country; and he could assert that in every part of the country there never was a time when, taken as a whole, the trade was in a greater state of prosperity and more full employment, notwithstanding the admission of foreign thrown silk and the foreign manufactured article, than now. In Spitalfields tickets had been put up in many places advertising for hands to any amount; and he was told that in the mills those masters who wanted thrown silk for use in manufacturing, could not get it as fast as they wanted it. Why, on the very evening that his noble Friend was originally about to bring forward this petition, about a fortnight ago, a meeting of the velvet weavers (who constituted the greater portion of the silk weavers of Spitalfields) was held to consider whether they should not demand an increase of wages. They had demanded that increase; and it was at once acceded to by many of the masters. He insisted that in every species of silk goods consumption had been greatly extended; that the export trade had increased nearly threefold; that the quantities of the manufactured article had been increased in proportion as the admission of foreign goods was made unrestricted; that the importation of the raw material had increased 100 per cent. this year, as compared with the corresponding period in the last year; and that the throwsters, whose branch of the trade had been affected by the proceedings of last year, and who would be still more affected by the proceedings of this year,

were in a better position than they had ever been in before; and that all these were cogent reasons why their Lordships should agree to the proposition of Her Majesty's Government.

LORD STANLEY had often heard it said, that anything might be proved by figures; and certainly, knowing the ability of his noble Friend who had just sat down, knowing also the immense advantages which he had from his command of documents and papers inaccessible to their Lordships, and information moreover which he must have received from authentic sources—he was not surprised at the effect produced upon their Lordships by the statements of the noble Lord. And yet he had the presumption to think that before he sat down he would be able to show that his noble Friend had not in any way established the case he had attempted to prove, or rather the case which he ought to have attempted to prove—namely, that there was either in the present or in the past condition of the British silk trade any ground for the great reduction of duties which had been proposed by Her Majesty's Government. If his noble Friend had proved anything it was this—that our silk trade was at the present moment in a most thriving condition—that our importations and our revenue, and our exports, had gone on largely increasing, and, consequently, that the trade was in a condition in which a prudent Government would say, "In God's name let us leave this prosperous state of things undisturbed." But when his noble Friend had attempted to prove what he (Lord Stanley) thought he had not succeeded in proving, that our silk trade was at present in a most prosperous condition in consequence of the adoption of the free-trade principle, had not his arguments upon that point completely negated his statement with respect to the prevalence of smuggling? His noble Friend had gone on to state, that, in his opinion, the proposed reduction of duties would not injure the producer in this country. Now, first of all, he (Lord Stanley) differed from his noble Friend as to his facts; he also differed from him as to the effect produced by the change of 1824, in the prosperity of our silk trade; and he differed from him more especially upon a point which he ought to have proved, or else he had proved nothing—namely, that the results which he had stated had been brought about, not by a diminution of the duty on the raw material, but by a concurrent diminution of

the duty on the manufactured article. No man could doubt that the removal of duties on a raw material would naturally lead to a great increase in the consumption of that raw material; and he certainly was not surprised that after the changes of the year 1824 there had been a considerable increase in the importation of the raw material into this country. But that increase had not been so great as his noble Friend would have their Lordships suppose; and, moreover, the increase had not taken place at the time, or in the manner, or to the extent, which his noble Friend would lead them to believe. His noble Friend had been extremely ingenious in the statement he had made to the House; and by any one who had not looked into the facts of the case before, he could easily understand that the statement of his noble Friend would be accepted as nearly conclusive. What had his noble Friend told their Lordships? He had said, "Look to decennial periods—I will not trouble the House with the details of particular years—but look to the immense improvement which has taken place in decennial periods. In the ten years before 1823, the average importation was 1,520,000 lbs., while in the year 1844 the importation was 4,021,000 lbs." That certainly sounded exceedingly well. But he hoped his noble Friend would not be offended if he addressed to him the words—"Now mark how a plain tale will put thee down." He (Lord Stanley) also would show the average increase of importation in a series of years before the alteration of the duties, as contrasted with the average increase in a series of years after the alteration; and that, he thought, would be a fairer test of the advantages of the change than that to which his noble Friend had had recourse. He would take an average of three years, and not an average of ten years. He found that the average importation of the three years 1815, 1816, and 1817, of the raw material, had amounted to 1,388,000 lbs.; the average importation of the three years 1818, 1819, and 1820, had amounted to 1,844,000 lbs.; and the average importation of the three years 1821, 1822, and 1823, had amounted to 2,325,000 lbs.; and in 1824 it was 3,884,000 lbs. There had, therefore, been an increase before the principle of free trade came into operation from 1815 to 1824—a decennial period—from 1,388,000 lbs. to 3,884,000 lbs. The duties were reduced on the 1st March, 1824. An increase had thus taken place, in the

three triennial periods which he had mentioned, in the importation of the raw material, of about 1,000,000 lbs. each. He found that in the year 1824, in which the change of duties had been effected, the importation of raw and thrown silk had amounted to 3,800,000 lbs.; and that the importation in 1844 had amounted to 4,400,000 lbs.; which did not give an increase of 1,000,000 lbs. in six years; but an increase of 800,000 lbs. in the course of twenty years under Mr. Huskisson's measure. So much for his noble Friend's decennial periods, and the results of the measure of 1824. But his noble Friend had gone on to state what he admitted to be true, that there had been a very large increase in another article of manufacture; and he boasted that our manufacturers had achieved a great triumph of skill by converting an article which had previously been "a waste" into a beautiful manufacture. Now he (Lord Stanley) said that, whatever they might do with those knubs and husks, it had nothing whatever to do in the calculation of the increase in the silk trade. Had their Lordships ever seen these knubs and husks? He thought there were many of their Lordships that had not, and therefore he would take leave to show them to them. [The noble Lord here produced a small parcel, from which he took three small bundles, and then proceeded.] Here was a beautiful article that was called Italian silk, and worth from 20s. to 27s. a pound; here was another description of silk, but of an inferior quality, and worth only from 10s. to 12s. per lb.—it was called Bengal silk; and here, said the noble Lord [producing a bundle which somewhat resembled undressed flax], "is the valuable article which goes by the name of knubs and husks; this article is worth from 6d. to 10d. per pound—which you must take into consideration when you are told to look at the amount of the gross weight of your importations." In the year 1824, the total importation of raw silk, thrown silk, knubs and husks, had amounted to 4,000,000 lbs.; and in 1844, it amounted to 6,200,000 lbs., showing a total increase of 2,200,000 lbs. But out of that increase the increase in knubs and husks had amounted from 133,000 lbs. in 1824, to 1,775,000 lbs. in 1844; so that out of the increase of 2,200,000 lbs. there had been an increase to the amount of more than 1,500,000 lbs. in the article of knubs and husks. Now, when they endeavoured to estimate the advantages of the silk trade,

they ought not to consider its amount in mere pounds weight, but they ought to look to the amount expended by the making up of the article. These knubs and husks were worked up into coarse yarns, or were used for mixing with and adulterating the already inferior Bengal silk in making "bandannas" which were exported principally to France. A mixture of equal quantities of Bengal silk, and of "waste" silk, would be worth about 5s. 6d. per pound; and the value of the article manufactured from that mixture was about 7s. 6d. per pound; that was to say, there would be left for the manufacturer of that article in this country a balance of about 2s. per pound. Whereas the Bengal, when worked up by itself, would produce a value of 20s., leaving a profit on employment to the amount of 10s. or 12s. The Italian silk, though it would cost from 27s. to 30s. in the pound when manufactured, would produce an article worth from 60s. to 70s., which would leave a balance in favour of employment, not of 2s., nor of 10s., but of from 30s. to 40s. He asked, then, were they to be told that it was a matter of indifference what description of silk should be introduced into this country, provided only it produced employment, without any regard to the profit which might arise from that employment? When they got ten times the employment and ten times the remuneration for the labour of one article which they got by the labour of another article, should it then be a matter of indifference whether the article consisted of rubbish or of a finer description? But when they began to deal with the question—when they looked at the exports of the manufactured goods, and compared them with the imports of the foreign silk manufacture, they were told to look at the imports of the raw material, and that was adduced as an argument to show how much was consumed; but let him say, that the amount of consumption depended altogether on the description of raw material. He had already shown their Lordships that there had been a large increase before 1824; but that, comparatively speaking, there had been but a small increase between 1824 and 1844. He stated the other night, that, on the whole, the trade had not materially increased in the last fifteen years. The exports, as stated by the noble Lord, since 1826, after a great deduction of duties, no doubt had increased; but let the noble Lord show him (Lord Stanley) any other branch in which

there had not been a much larger increase: take, for instance, the cotton trade, the woollen trade, and in any or either of these they would find a larger increase than they would discover in the exports of the silk trade. The noble Lord considered it as a triumph that they sent goods to France; but what was the fact? The greatest proportion was manufactured from this rubbish, which he had shown them. The noble Lord did admit that a great part of the exports to France consisted of an inferior article produced from an inferior description of waste silk; indeed the whole of the exports to France, in which the noble Lord prided himself, were composed of an inferior article—a cheap description of goods; and were it not for that description of exports to France, the exports of silk would have been very considerably diminished within the last two years. He said, then, it did not bear in the slightest degree on the argument, when they came to discuss the question of competing with the French producer of an article, inasmuch as they sent to them that which they never dreamt of making up at all. There was a great disparity in this reciprocity. They sent them that which was produced from an inferior material, while they took from them an article of a higher priced description. He could not exactly state what the value of the goods might be; but it was a well-established fact, that the imports consisted of the finest class of goods. In 1826 the quantity for the home consumption was only 48,000 lbs., while in 1827 it was 115,000 lbs.; and it had been rising since, until the imports of French goods had risen from 115,000 lbs. of waste to 310,000 lbs. in 1845; while our export trade had been almost stationary. Our exports of raw material were trifling; but the imports of the foreign manufacturer, of the highest value and of the most expensive description, had greatly increased—as he said before, from 115,000 lbs. to 310,000 lbs. He said, therefore, upon the very face of this, there appeared no evidence that our trade was on the increase: there was no evidence to prove that any material increase had taken place in consequence of Mr. Henskisson's measure of 1824, though he admitted that the taking off the duty of the raw material did tend to effect an increase; but no proof had been adduced to show that we could compete with the French importer, and who sent us the more important article; and there were far less grounds

to show us that we ought to reduce the existing duties on silk by one-half—and this was the proposition which was brought forward by Her Majesty's Government. His noble Friend had stated that it had been impossible for our manufacturers to obtain silk fast enough for their purposes; and to that cause he attributed the stagnation in the trade. Now, he held in his hand a circular of undoubted authority which was drawn up by a well-informed and experienced person in London, in which circular there was given the stock of imported raw silk in hand on the 1st of January last, when it amounted to 15,720 bales. The previous year it was 13,000, the year before 11,000, the year before that 12,000, and on preceding years 11,000, 12,000, and 10,000; but since 1838 there was not so large a stock on hand as there was on the 1st of January, 1846. He believed there were only three years since the year 1830 when the stock had been larger than on the 1st of January, 1846; and yet his noble and learned Friend told them that it was only the exhaustion of the foreign supplies that prevented a greater amount of manufactures being prepared in that country. His noble Friend had not brought forward very prominently the question of smuggling as a ground for the reduction of the duty; but on a former occasion it was stated that it did appear, from the returns of the French custom-houses, that a much greater quantity of silk was shipped for England than was received there, and that, therefore, there must have been a great amount of smuggling. Now, although he did not mean to deny that smuggling took place, he believed that there was less "running" of silk goods than of any other article; and their admission took place through the instrumentality or connivance of their own custom-house officers, who permitted them to pass without payment of duty. He held in his hand a return of the committals and convictions for smuggling in the year ending 1845; the number was 755; and of course it was to be presumed that a large proportion of these must have been for smuggling silk from France. Of these 755, 538 were for smuggling tobacco, 176 for smuggling spirits, 31 for smuggling tea; and the total number for smuggling silk was 10 out of 755 persons. He could only suppose that the officers of the Customs were equally vigilant with regard to silk as other articles; and if the same amount of smuggling took place in silk as

in the articles of tobacco and spirits, the number of offenders would have been in proportionate amount. He did not, however, believe, that there had been a great amount of silk goods run. Since his noble Friend had last spoken, he (Lord Stanley) had referred to the evidence of Mr. Deacon Hume, and he found that Mr. Hume had fixed an average of 25 to 30 per cent. as the amount of duty which might fairly be imposed without the risk of encouraging smuggling. In 1832 Mr. Deacon Hume expressed his opinion on the subject of silk, and he stated that as the maximum for protection and the minimum for smuggling—would encourage smuggling. Therefore, so far as Mr. D. Hume might be considered an authority, there was no ground for the reduction of duty now proposed. He did not mean to enter into any details which should have been given to their Lordships by the agents themselves. But what did the silk manufacturers complain of? They said, and they had said so to himself, while you profess to give them nominally a duty of 15 per cent., practically you only give a duty of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., or 8 per cent., or perhaps 9 per cent.—and not as you state 15 per cent. In all former statutes and tariffs there was a distinction observed as to silks, gauzes, velvets, and so on, which was not the case in the present Tariff. In the Tariff of 1842 the duty on plain silk was 11s. the lb.; on figured silk 15s. the lb. They reduced these now, but on what principle? They reduced the figured and plain silk to the same level of 5s.—that is, while they professed to give a protection of 15 per cent., they reduced both to 5s.—5s. was not a protection of 15 per cent. to any description of goods. He (Lord Stanley) had a case brought before him that morning which he should mention. There were 24 pieces of silk, amounting to 444 yards, which weighed 50 lbs.; the value of this was 170*l.*; it was a valuable description of silk, although but plain, worth 7*s.* 9*d.* a yard. Upon that a duty of 15 per cent. would be 25*l.* 10*s.*; but the duty being taken by the weight, that being the mode now proposed to levy the duty according to weight, instead of its being 25*l.* 10*s.*, it would be only 12*l.* 13*s.* 10*d.*, which would be a duty of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., instead of 15 per cent. If that had been brocaded silk, the expense would have been still greater and the duty higher. Now when his noble Friend made an average of silks, satins, and velvets, he wanted to know why he had departed from the system with regard

to ribbons alone, and why they had been excluded from the system of averages? His noble Friend had told them that while the measure was in progress a deputation had waited on the Board of Trade, headed by Mr. Ellis, the Member for Coventry, and had shown that a protecting duty of 5*s.* on the pound was not equal to 15 per cent. They showed further, that with regard to ribbons a different system of classification should be adopted, and accordingly the duty on ribbons was raised from 5*s.* to 6*s.* per lb. upon plain ribbons, 8*s.* per lb. upon plain satin ribbons, and 10*s.* upon silk or satin ribbons, striped or figured, brocaded, or of more than one colour. Why was that discriminating duty to be kept up with regard to the ribbons of Coventry? The noble Lord must have been induced to comply by some powerful persuasion; he must have been induced to depart from his principle of uniformity by some great influence. He abandoned his duty of 5*s.*; but more than that, he abandoned so far his principle of uniformity. But he would now on this subject refer to the amount of wages and employment. From 1826 to 1832, they had it in evidence that a large and progressive decrease had taken place in the number of spindles which were employed, and there was also an increase in the number of mills and spindles which began to stand still; also the accounts he had received from private individuals were at variance with the statements of the noble Lord, who mentioned to the House that all hands were now fully employed, and that there was also a considerable rise in wages, and that this rise was going on; but he (Lord Stanley) was informed that, with the exception of one article in the silk trade, and that one article was figured velvets, there was a very material decrease in wages. On that one article the highest duty was paid, a duty of 1*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.*, and which produced the highest wages; but the present measure must affect the wages of labour on that article, as the duty was to be reduced from 1*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.* to 9*s.* a lb. First, they were going to reduce that duty which, according to Deacon Hume's calculation, should be 30 per cent., to 15 per cent.; and next, they reduced this duty of 1*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.* to 9*s.*: that is, they made a reduction equal to two-thirds. It might effect the desired object, but it did not so appear to him. He was assured, and he was assured of it in opposition to the statement of the noble Lord, that in the silk trade wages had fallen,

and that they were falling in Macclesfield as well as in other places; and this he could have proved to their Lordships, had they not refused to hear counsel and evidence by which those facts would be proved one way or the other. The noble Lord had also stated that this measure would give an immense impetus to the silk trade. Was that so? On the contrary, there had been a decrease in the wages paid to those employed. In London, the reduction had been from *1s. 2d.* to *1s.* a day. Although he could hardly agree in the opinion that great advantages would be derived to the trade from the free introduction of the raw material, yet though it were so admitted, the principle was fully reconcilable with the doctrine of protection—it was a part of protection; for one principle of protection was, to obtain the raw material as cheaply as possible, and to place as high a duty as possible on the competing article of foreign manufacture. But that was not the question now; no reduction could take place on the raw material, as it came in perfectly free of duty; that was the case, while he thought a duty even on the raw material would increase the silk manufactures of this country. He had shown their Lordships that the foreign imports were increasing, while the exports to foreign countries were in a measure at a stand-still. How were they called upon to meet that state of things? They were called on to meet it by the blessings of an increased competition. They were called on to meet it, not by giving greater facilities, or protection to native industry, but rather by diminishing the one and retarding the other. They were about to diminish that protection under which the silk manufacturing operatives had prospered. By diminishing that protection, they would encourage the import of foreign goods, and thus incapacitate our silk manufacturers at home to maintain that position which hitherto they had occupied. This alteration in the Tariff was not called for by public policy: it was not founded in wisdom, it was not based on justice, nor had it been decided by argument; and he would only add, although it might be an inferior and a very unimportant consideration, by reducing the duty one-half there would be a great reduction in the revenue derived from these imports, which at the present moment produced an annual revenue of 323,000*l.*

On Question, House divided :—Contents 50; Not-Contents 75: Majority 25.

The Schedule was then agreed to, and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Bill reported without amendment.

House adjourned.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Thursday, June 25, 1846.

CORN IMPORTATION BILL—THIRD READING.

THE EARL OF RIPON moved that this Bill be read a Third Time.

THE EARL OF WICKLOW said, as they were now at the last stage of these proceedings, and were about finally to conclude this great change in the commercial policy of this country, he begged to direct the attention of Government and their Lordships generally to two points on which, it appeared to him, that no information had been afforded to their Lordships in the course of these proceedings, and on which he thought that both to the country and their Lordships information was due from the Government. The first of these respected the promises made by the First Minister of the Crown when he introduced his resolutions to confer certain equivalents or compensations, which, it was stated, should accompany this measure. They had now reached the last stage of it, and yet up to the present time he had not been able to ascertain that in either House of Parliament anything like a proposal as to any of these matters had been made. It appeared that this point was not considered by the Government of small importance at the time of the measure being introduced, for Ministers then represented that the equivalent to be proposed would in some degree compensate the landed interest for the loss which they would sustain. How was it, then, that they had now come to this period of the Session, and that no notice had been taken of the subject in either House of Parliament? Was it the intention of Ministers that the Session should close without any proposal of compensation being brought forward? One such compensation had been promised to the country with which he was connected, which, though not equivalent to the landed gentry or tenantry for the injury to their interests which would be inflicted by the Corn Bill, was in itself of some little importance; and it ought to have been brought forward by the Govern-

ment independently altogether of this measure, for it was one of the Bills strongly recommended to the Government by the Commission of which Lord Devon was at the head. He referred to the proposition by which the whole expense of the constabulary force of that country was to be thrown on the Consolidated Fund, and the various counties relieved from any portion of the expense. Such a step was proposed by Lord Devon's Commission, not with reference to such a measure as the present, but as a matter of simple justice. Upon that subject, however, they had heard no proposition of Her Majesty's Government made to either House of Parliament. He therefore thought, before they agreed to the third reading of this Bill, it was incumbent on some Member of the Government to explain to their Lordships what was their intention with reference to any measure to be brought forward. He now came to the second point, which appeared to him infinitely more important. Allusion had been occasionally made to the subject in that House, especially by his noble Friend opposite (Lord Montagu), but no explanation had been afforded by Her Majesty's Government. When the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government brought forward in the House of Commons his proposition for an income tax, he obtained the consent of the House to the tax for three years, on the especial ground that he was then effecting great financial changes and extensive reductions in the customs, which would inevitably lessen the amount of the customs duties, so as to require for a certain short period a means of taxation in lieu of them. But the right hon. Baronet held out strong hopes to Parliament, that by the end of three years those reductions would so much increase the produce of the customs duties, as to render it unnecessary to renew the income tax. It was solely on this ground that the right hon. Baronet had obtained a three years' income tax, for he believed that no other Minister who had governed this country for many years would have obtained it on any grounds whatsoever; but the great confidence reposed in the right hon. Baronet as a financial Minister by Parliament and the country, induced them to waive the strong objection which prevailed against an income tax in time of peace, and so far to confide in his promises that the operation of the reductions would be successful, as to concede the imposition of the tax for that period. The

right hon. Baronet's promises, they knew, had remained unfulfilled; but Parliament was induced to extend the period for which the tax had been granted, from a belief that by the reductions in the customs duties the revenue of the country would be so increased as to make the continuance of the tax unnecessary. He believed this would have been the case if things had been allowed to go on as they were then doing, for the revenue was improving, and commerce in every department was flourishing. But most unfortunately, in the present Session, partly owing to the very increase which had been thus predicted, the right hon. Gentleman and his Government were determined by a sense of duty not to remain content with the alterations they had made, but to make those other alterations which their Lordships had been considering during the last three weeks. His noble Friend at the head of the Board of Trade (the Earl of Dalhousie), by the able manner in which he had conducted these proceedings—and he gave his noble Friend credit for having done so in a most masterly manner—had shown himself an able statesman, a great debater, and capable of conducting affairs in any department which might be entrusted to him; but his noble Friend had never ventured to hold out to their Lordships that the result of the measures he proposed would ever raise the revenue beyond the point which it had attained previous to the reductions, for he had swept away, in a great measure, the income derived from the duties which they affected. His noble Friend only proposed his reductions in the hope that in the course of years the buoyancy of the public resources, and the augmentation of trade, might raise the revenue, not up to the amount anticipated by Sir R. Peel when he first proposed the income tax; but up to the point at which the revenue stood at the present time. Under these circumstances, Government must have seen the position in which they placed themselves with regard to the future taxation of the country. They had now the income tax for three years. Their Lordships would, however, observe that the financial Minister, when he brought forward the budget, had held out little or no hope of a surplus—the whole surplus, including China money, not being calculated at more than 70,000*l*. Had they not then a right to demand that Her Majesty's Ministers should state their expectations with respect to the future re-

venue of the country? Was it not perfectly clear, on their own showing, that the customs duties would not rise to the point at which they had formerly stood? Had not their Lordships a right to know if it was the intention of Government to propose to Parliament the renewal of the income tax? If it was not their intention, they had a right to know to what sources of revenue Ministers intended to look as a compensation for the taxes they were now abolishing. If it was their intention, they were bound to announce it fairly. A new Parliament would be elected before the expiration of the present tax; and if Ministers intended to propose a renewal of the tax, it must be to a new Parliament. He asked them, did they believe that a new Parliament would ever sanction that tax as a permanent tax? If it was not their intention to propose it, they must have some other measure to propose which they ought to let the House know. But did they believe that any Parliament that would ever meet in this country would sanction the imposition of the income tax as a permanent tax? He believed the contrary. He believed that no Parliament would ever sanction that direct mode of taxation as a permanency. See to what this would drive them. If they determined to adopt the direct mode of taxation, and to abolish that indirect mode which had hitherto been looked upon as the most proper for a commercial, or indeed for any country, then it became absolutely necessary that the whole or almost the whole of the taxation of the country should be derived from that source. It was impossible that another Parliament, if it sanctioned that measure, would ever allow the malt tax to continue, or that tax which they had been discussing lately, the duty on hops. It was impossible that Government, in considering the measures they had brought forward, should not have fully and distinctly deliberated on these matters. Was it fair or just that they should now conclude these measures without any information whatever being given respecting the points to which he had called their attention? Let him not be told that the financial Ministers in the other House were the proper persons to answer those questions. There was his noble Friend at the head of the Board of Control (the Earl of Ripon), who had been Chancellor of the Exchequer, and without whose full sanction no measure of this kind could be proposed to Parliament. His noble Friend at

the head of the Board of Trade was also perfectly capable of giving an answer; and if they declined, on this last stage of the measure, to give an answer, the country would draw its own conclusions from their silence. Let it not be said that because Ministers were going to resign, they would throw the affairs of the country in an embarrassed state into other hands. Let it not be said that, because they had received the affairs of the country in an embarrassed state from their predecessors, they would retaliate by leaving them in a similar condition. Such an excuse would not be received by the country; it would be tampering with public feeling to offer it; but he knew that his noble Friends were men of too high honour to be influenced by such considerations. He said that, before the measure passed, Ministers were bound to give their Lordships the information upon these subjects which they must possess; and he called on his noble Friends to give him an answer on the two points he had stated, which he considered of vast importance to the country.

The EARL OF RIPON said, that as he had no right to object to the questions which had been put to him by the noble Earl, and as he had no fault to find with the manner in which they had been put, he would endeavour to give them an answer. The first question was, whether Her Majesty's Government intended to carry into effect those measures which were stated at the commencement of the present Session as intended to accompany the alteration which they proposed to make in the Corn Laws, and which were considered likely to be beneficial to the agricultural interest. He was not aware that they were to be considered as equivalents or compensations; they were considered measures right in themselves, and as far as they went tending to do that which it was desirable to effect—to diminish the cost of production to those whose capital was employed. No doubt Her Majesty's Government felt now as they did then, that what they undertook to propose to Parliament with that object in view, they were bound to adhere to; and although it might be true that those measures had not yet passed in the shape of law, he believed some of them did not positively require an Act of Parliament, except in so far as the sum to be raised from the Consolidated Fund, instead of in any other way, was concerned. There was, however, another measure of very considerable

importance, which stood much on the same footing as those to which he had referred: he alluded to the measure relative to the removal of paupers. That measure was, no doubt, quite independent of the question of the Corn Law, and would have been a proper measure to adopt whether the Corn Laws were altered or not. A Bill had been brought into the other House of Parliament for carrying that measure into effect; and he could not answer for the circumstances which had rendered it impossible to proceed with that Bill so as to bring it into their Lordships' House; and when his noble Friend complained that the measures had not been brought forward in their Lordships' House, he must understand that they were of such a nature that their Lordships could not originate them. The noble Earl having asked those questions, proceeded to inquire what it was the intention of Her Majesty's Government to do as to the continuation of the property tax. Now, under all circumstances, he apprehended that no Government could undertake to give answers or pledge themselves to reply to such questions as these. The property tax had been originally brought in for three years; it had been since renewed, and he thought it would be exceedingly unwise to give any pledge that it would not again be renewed. Looking on the question in that light, he must therefore decline answering it. But he would make one or two remarks on the observations of the noble Earl as to the actual condition of the revenue with respect to the effect of the reductions which had been made within the last four years. He thought his noble Friend could hardly have attended to a document which had been laid on the Table, which would have explained to him the ground on which the Government trusted that the reductions made in the customs and excise were not only not likely to be attended with the full extent of the loss which the numerical amount of the reduction would have led them to expect, but that in point of fact they were entitled to count upon a considerable increase, he would not say naturally arising out of those reductions, but in connexion with them; and he trusted to be able to satisfy their Lordships that that was the case. It appeared that in the year 1842 the amount of revenue derived from the customs was 19,661,000*l.* In the course of that year duties were reduced to the amount of 1,338,000*l.*, which of course, unless there had been an increase of con-

sumption, would have reduced the customs duties excepted in the following year by that sum of 1,338,000*l.*, so that if the customs in 1843 had amounted to 18,323,000*l.*, the revenue would have undergone the full loss occasioned by that reduction. But what was the fact? Instead of the reduction bringing the customs duties down to 18,323,000*l.*, the duties for that year produced no less than 20,275,000*l.*, being an increase of upwards of 600,000*l.* beyond the positive amount of 1842, although the duties taken off in that year amounted to 1,338,000*l.* In the year 1843, the customs duties were still further diminished, and the duties reduced amounted to 171,000*l.* But did the revenue suffer to that extent? Not at all. The amount of customs duties, in 1844, was 21,460,000*l.*, being nearly 1,800,000*l.* more than 1842, notwithstanding the reduction of duties to the amount of 1,500,000*l.* In the year 1844 the duties had been reduced still further, to the extent of 286,000*l.*: the products of those duties in 1845 certainly had not amounted to as much as in the two preceding years; but in 1845, their Lordships would recollect that a great reduction had taken place, to the extent of 2,418,000*l.* in the customs duties; and although that reduction did not take place until late in the year, a great portion of the loss would take place in that year itself. Notwithstanding all this, the amount of duties received in the year 1845 had been 19,829,000*l.*, exceeding the absolute amount even in 1842, by about 200,000*l.*, although in the course of the four preceding years duties had been remitted to the amount of upwards of 4,000,000*l.* If then there had been no increase in the receipts connected with the reduction of duty, the sum which stood at 19,691,000*l.* in 1842, should have been only 15,661,000*l.* in 1845; whereas in point of fact the actual receipts in 1845 amounted to 19,829,000*l.* Had not the Government, then, with those facts before them, a right to anticipate that there would not be a permanent reduction in the customs to the amount of the duty which would be removed? His noble Friend would observe that the increase had not been confined to any particular period, but had been spread over the whole of the years of diminished duties. In the excise, to which the noble Earl had alluded, reductions had also taken place. In 1842 the excise had pro-

duced 12,517,000*l.*, and in 1843 had amounted to 12,879,000*l.* In 1844 a reduction had been made to the extent of 70,000*l.*, and in 1845 a further reduction of 913,000*l.* had taken place. But, notwithstanding these reductions, the excise in the subsequent year amounted to 13,585,000*l.* He did not apprehend that the whole loss of those reductions would take place in the course of the year; but whether it did or did not, the excise revenue of 1845 exceeded that of 1844; the excise of 1844 exceeded that of 1843, the receipts of that year being also larger than 1842. The sum total of the excise and customs in those four years had been 32,178,000*l.* in 1842; 33,152,000*l.* in 1843; 34,714,000*l.* in 1844; and 33,450,000*l.* in 1845; while the total amount of duties removed had amounted to 5,197,000*l.*; notwithstanding which the receipts in 1845 had exceeded those of 1842 by upwards of 1,000,000*l.* He thought the experience of those four years, therefore, tended to show there were rational grounds for assuming that the total amount of the reduction, great as it might be, would not cause a reduction in the amount of the revenue. That was the basis on which the Government proceeded, and he thought their views had been fully borne out by the fact. They flattered themselves that in a limited course of years there would be made up in the increased receipts from these sources an equivalent to that which they had lost. It was impossible to suppose that the equivalent would be produced immediately; and it was necessary to provide some means by which the loss would be made up in the intermediate time, and that loss was made up by the income tax, to which, no doubt, there were very serious and grave objections, not only on account of the nature of the tax itself, but partly also from its having been introduced in a time of peace, and not reserved as a great resource in time of war. But it was necessary to provide that temporary means of making up a certain deficiency, which they had every reason to think could be made up as years went on; and they hoped to be able in future years to dispense with the renewal of that tax. He must decline expressing any opinion or giving any pledge on that subject. Of this he was quite certain, that Parliament never would be unwilling or afraid to take any measures that might be deemed necessary for preserving the revenue of the country in such a state as to meet all demands. Those demands were very great,

and it was deeply to be lamented that there was so little reason for holding out the chance of the expenses of the country being diminished; but it was a satisfaction to think that in regard of one source of expense to this country, there had been a considerable diminution, and that was in the charge for the public debt, which had been reduced by the amount of 1,000,000*l.*; and which, considering the state of our finances, was a circumstance of material importance. He had thus endeavoured to answer all the questions which had been put to him. He had brought no papers with him, not having expected the discussion to take such a turn; but, recollecting there was a document on the Table from which he could satisfy their Lordships, he had availed himself of the information it contained to do so.

LORD FEVERSHAM denied the assertion that the tenant-farmers were in favour of these new measures. That assertion had been made, and had been several times repeated, but nothing had been shown to prove or corroborate it. What had they done? They had held meetings all over the country, at which they had passed resolutions that indicated beyond the possibility of doubt what were the real feelings of their body. The noble Lord then read extracts from resolutions passed at protectionist meetings in Doncaster, in the North Riding of York, in Lincoln, at Spalding, and in Dorsetshire, which were strongly condemnatory of free trade in corn. These were the opinions of the tenant-farmers, who were said to be favourable to the Bill. But, said the supporters of this measure, they have nothing to fear; the land which will be thrown out of cultivation by the operation of the Bill, must be of the worst and poorest soil. Why, it was that poor soil which required the greatest number of labourers for its tillage. So that the evil of diminished employment would be increased instead of lessened. No one knew what the price of corn would be reduced to. When a Member of the Government in that House had been asked what the probable price of corn would be, he replied that he would not hazard any prediction on the subject. That might be satisfactory to the noble Lord, but he doubted if it would satisfy the House. Indeed, it did not appear that Government had taken any pains to calculate the price of corn under the new law. He had lately spoken to an intelligent American gentleman, who assured him

that corn could be exported from America under 30s. a quarter. He could not at all concur with those who thought this measure would be so conducive to the improvement of the labouring classes. A much more useful measure, in his opinion, would be the Ten Hours Bill, which would be a benefit to them in every way. That Bill had been introduced into the other House of Parliament, where it had been rejected by a very small majority, aided by the Government; but he believed the time was not very far distant when it would receive the sanction of that House. When it should come up to their Lordships, as it was but a measure of policy and justice, he hoped they would give it their favourable consideration. As to the Bill before them, he regretted they had passed it, as in effect they had done, and more particularly that the majority of the right reverend Prelates had supported it, because he believed it had been very greatly through their influence and votes that the measure had been successful. Their Lordships' House and the agriculturists had always supported the rights and privileges of the Established Church, of the right reverend Prelates, and of the rural Clergy, and he therefore regretted it. This Bill was a premium to agitation. It had been brought forward by the Ministers of the Crown, but they could not be said to be its originators or promoters. Those who really originated and promoted it were the manufacturers and masters of Stockport and Manchester. It was nothing but concession to intimidation and agitation to pass this Bill. He looked upon it as a downward movement, calculated not to uphold but to overthrow the Constitution. It was impossible, he maintained, to say which of the great institutions of the country would not be subject to attack after their Lordships had given their consent to a Bill like the present, which had been commenced by a great agitation; which had been carried by a betrayal of great public trusts; and which would be regarded as a concession to that agitation, and a record of that betrayal. In conclusion, he begged leave to enter his decided protest against the third reading of the Bill.

The Duke of CLEVELAND said, as this was probably the last opportunity that would present itself to speak on this Bill, he would rise not to create any further delay, but to protest solemnly against the policy of the measure. After having listened attentively to all the arguments and

evidence urged in favour of the measure, he remained still of the same opinion, and he was still as strong an opposer of the Bill as ever he had been. Scarcely had any measure ever passed the House on which so many of their Lordships had given their opinions *vis à voce*, and the occasion would, on that account, be memorable in history; but still more memorable would it be for the sacrifice of private opinion to party interest. The House was constituted by three distinct parties, two of which had been hitherto the rival parties of the State; but one of these opposed parties having sacrificed their real opinions to party interests and party views, had coalesced, and had overcome any opposition which could be made to them by those who retained their old opinions and acted up to their old principles. How many noble Lords would say the Bill was in conformity with their preconceived opinions? Many noble Lords were advocates of a fixed duty, and, notwithstanding they still maintained this opinion, yet, seeing their party on the threshold of office, they gave up their convictions, and agreed to support the measure as it was. Having referred to the manner in which the question had been treated by one side of the House, he would refer to the way in which noble Lords had dealt with it on the Ministerial side of the House. Many noble Lords, who had changed their votes but had not changed their opinions, had taken the more prudent course of recording a silent vote against their opinions. Other noble Lords had completely changed their opinions; but the main pressure of the debate had fallen on two noble Lords connected with the Government, one of whom had not always been exactly of the same way of thinking on this question. He would now say a few words about a third party in that House, to which he had the honour to avow his adherence. Though their Lordships had decided against them by a large majority, he hoped he might claim credit for his party for consistency, for independence of conduct, for fairness in their actions, and honesty in their intentions. He had taken the liberty at an early period of the discussion of appealing to the Episcopal Bench as the representatives of the parochial clergy. That appeal was responded to by a right reverend Prelate, who said the parochial clergy were not justified in opposing this Bill: first, because they were a small body; and, next, because they had taken no part in

the agitation against it—extraordinary reasons, he must take leave to say, and the latter of them not doing much credit to the right rev. Prelate's charity. If the Bench of Bishops had voted with his party, they should have had a majority of those present against the Bill. The number of proxies was large—thirty-five—and a majority were in favour of the Bill. It was not his intention to deprecate the system of proxies. It was founded on long and established usage. That was the only ground of its justification; for voting in any society by proxies was not in accordance with public taste at present. If they meant to preserve this privilege, they should take care not to abuse it. It was true that noble Lords resident in this country might be as capable of forming a judgment on a public measure if they resided 200 miles from town, as if they attended in that House; but that the proxies of Lords in different parts of Europe, who never heard of this measure, or never imagined that such a measure would be brought forward, should be resorted to, he thought a most extraordinary proceeding. He should give one instance. There was the Marquess of Tweeddale, Governor of Madras, who had been absent for four years from this country, and who was so engaged by the late war in India, that he doubted whether he ever heard of this measure. The lamentable part of this measure was, the loss of confidence which it inspired in the humble followers of leading men like himself. His political life had not been a short one. For half of it he attached himself to the Whig party; but in 1833, he found himself unable, on the Reform Bill, to go as far as the Government was inclined to go. Far be it from him to say there was any breach of faith on that occasion by the Whigs. From that time to the present he had supported Sir Robert Peel, whom he looked on as one of the greatest men this country had produced, whose talents he admired, and in whom he had placed implicit confidence. It could be easily supposed what his feelings now were at finding himself deserted and standing aloof, as it were, from both the parties. But he had some consolation in the fact that there was still left a leader whom he could follow, and that a man of no mean talents—he meant the noble Lord near him (Lord Stanley). He had no hesitation in saying that he should for the future look up to that noble Lord not only as his guide but

his polar star. He had no favour to expect from him, nor had he received any; but he had the greatest possible admiration for his talents, and for what he considered much more essential to a statesman—honesty in his professions. He had sat a long time near his noble Friend in the other House, and he had always heard him speak without hesitation or equivocation; and he had never seen him look for a loophole through which he might one day escape. He protested against the policy and principle of the measure, because it was uncalled for by the circumstances of the case, and because it was a thorough breach of faith on the part of the Government.

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE should not have risen on the present occasion had it not been for the observations made by the noble Duke who had just sat down in reference to proxies; and if those observations had been merely of a general character, he should not under those circumstances have felt called on to notice them. But the noble Duke had mentioned by name a noble and gallant relative of his (the Earl of Dalhousie's), the Marquess of Tweeddale, who was now serving abroad; and as his proxy had been intrusted to him, he hoped their Lordships would allow him to say a few words in reference to what had fallen from the noble Duke. He widely differed from the noble Duke in respect to the view he took of the principle of the vote by proxy. Whether that practice was right or wrong, as long as it existed he contended that the proxy was given on the principle of the entire delegation of the mind of the person giving his proxy. That was the principle of the vote by proxy; and as long as that practice existed, it mattered not whether the individual whose proxy was made use of was in India, or dining in Belgrave-square. Having stated thus much on the general question, he would now briefly advert to the particular case referred to by the noble Duke. The noble Duke had stated that it was utterly impossible that the noble and gallant Lord whose name had been mentioned (the Marquess of Tweeddale), being at the distance he was from England, should be aware of what was going on in this country. The noble Duke seemed to forget that this question respecting the Corn Laws had been substantially before the country for no less a period than seven months; and the period of time necessary for communications to take place

with Madras did not exceed six weeks. Now, during the whole of these discussions, he had been in possession of the sentiments of his noble and gallant relative; and he could assure their Lordships that it was his firm conviction that his noble and gallant relative, had he been present, would have voted for the second reading of this Bill. He was bound also to state, that he believed his noble and gallant relative would, if he had been present, have voted for the Amendment in Committee for a fixed duty; and had their Lordships assented to that Amendment, and if, subsequently, any Motion had been made—on the third reading, for instance—to reverse that decision, he (Lord Dalhousie) should not have used his noble and gallant relative's proxy for the reversal of such decision, though on the general principle he should have been entitled to do so.

VISCOUNT GAGE was understood to say, in addressing their Lordships against the Bill, that the proposers of the measure had brought forward no argument in favour of it, except the power to pass it. He had heard it said, and that in quarters where he should have least expected it, that those who opposed this measure did so from a dread that it would operate against themselves. Now, he should like to know how far these ultra liberal Gentlemen meant to carry their imputations? Were they not to defend their own rights, properties, liberties, or he supposed their lives? Was that to be the state of nature of which they had heard? Who would defend them if they would not defend themselves? or what would be committed to them to defend if they did not defend what was their own? Where was the impropriety of their opposing a measure in which they saw, or fancied they saw, destruction to theirs and to them, with no countervailing benefit to the rest of their countrymen? And besides, if they were to be sacrificed for the benefit of the rest of the community, where was the doctrine to stop? Would noble Lords be allowed to roll in wealth while their poorer brethren were starving? Ten thousand a year! that was too much for any one family; what need of 500*l.*? what need of 100*l.*? They might depend upon it this would come; though, if their Lordships conceded in time, they might generously be allowed as much as would enable them to live—at least, for the term of their natural lives; though, if they delayed to pass the measure, they would

in the end be forced to do the same thing with a worse grace, and might be kicked out of their estates altogether. Did noble Lords believe that there was no danger in the operation of such a measure as the present? Had it not been admitted on all sides that the lesser yeomen might, and in all likelihood would be ruined? Well, then, who was to employ their labourers and the numerous artisans who were dependent upon them for employment? There would be no question, that if such were to be the case, the country towns would be ruined. Then would come the reaction upon the manufacturing towns; and, on the first pressure of distress, they would start several questions which would not be very palatable to their Lordships. If there were some advocates of this measure who appeared before them in the guise of friends, look who were its promoters on the other side. Was there a single republican democrat?—was there a single Quaker, Baptist, or Unitarian?—was there one known or suspected enemy to the Church or State, Crown or aristocracy, who would not be found heart and hand urging on this measure? Even if their Lordships approved of this measure—as much as nine-tenths of them in heart, notwithstanding their votes, disapproved of it—he should still say it was their bounden duty to stand firm in resisting it, at least until they were released from their post by the constitutionally expressed will of their country. Let no noble Lord flatter himself that this measure would be the last of the kind they would have to pass. The institutions of this country, both in Church and State, would be shaken to the foundation; the Charter would become the order of the day; and this great constitutional monarchy would be merged in some model republic, without power or influence abroad, and without stability at home. He regretted to be obliged to advert to the observations made on this question by the noble Duke (the Duke of Wellington) on occasion of the second reading of this measure. The noble Duke said he supported this measure, because he felt it necessary to support the Crown. A strange support to the Crown was that which weakened the influence of the Crown's firmest supporters, and which handed over the Crown to what he supposed they had now found out to be the more safe and loyal keeping of a Chamber of Commerce; and a right loyal statesman must he be who made that condition the price of his services! If, in a

strait like this, there was so little patriotism among our public men as this measure showed, then the time had come, and the nation might be said to deserve its fate. But if patriotism existed, then, no doubt, talent enough would be found sufficient to conduct the Government, and leaders able to inspire as much enthusiasm as any Member either of the late or the present Cabinet. When the noble and gallant Duke trusted that that might be the last advice which he would tender to their Lordships, he must confess that, great as was the pain with which he heard the whole speech, that part was not the least painful. He could not marvel that the prestige of the noble Duke's character should prevail even to the extent of carrying the present measure; but on that account he felt the more deeply that the last triumph gained by the noble Duke should be a triumph gained over his own country.

EARL STANHOPE said, it was not his intention to animadvert on the conduct of a Minister who would in the course of a very few hours, he trusted, be dismissed from office, and would never again be employed by the country. Nor would he advert to the way in which this measure had been carried, by a strange and monstrous coalition of parties who had conspired together to overthrow protection, which each of them had formerly supported. He would only say, that though defeated he was not discouraged; for he entertained a firm and confident conviction that protection would ultimately triumph, whatever might be the sacrifices and the struggles through which they were to pass. He did not intend to argue further against this Bill; but he wished to call their Lordships' attention to some of the consequences which were certain to follow it. He would assume throughout that the principles of free trade were the principles of common sense—that it would be a benefit to all classes of the country—and that it was their duty, as speedily as possible, to carry it out to the fullest extent. Well, if that were so, the agricultural classes, who were at all times entitled to consideration, would, under the altered circumstances of the case, have a right to demand that they should not be subject to exclusive taxation. They ought no longer to be subject to the land tax, to the malt tax, or to the hop duty. These were the taxes which at present they exclusively paid, for no manufacturer paid any tax upon his capital as the

agriculturist did on his land, nor on the produce of his industry, as the agriculturist did on his malt or hops. Neither ought they to be called upon to pay more than their just proportion of the church rate, the highway rate, or the poor rate. At present it was well known that by far the greater portion of those rates was paid by the occupiers of land. Then the Tithe Commutation Act ought to be altered. He had always opposed that tax, as unjust alike to the farmer and the titheowner; but at all events it was impossible to deny that the Act could not, in present circumstances, be fairly carried out. Then there was another circumstance—the admirable Amendment, founded in strict justice, which was proposed by the noble Duke (the Duke of Richmond) on the cross benches, ought to have met with the cordial and unanimous assent of their Lordships; and if such a measure did not follow, as it ought to have accompanied, this measure, their Lordships would commit the most flagrant act of injustice which had ever been perpetrated. Next see the position in which this measure would place all those persons carrying on work for which they had given contracts. They would wholly alter the relations of those parties; and they could not, without the most manifest injustice, compel the one to pay, or enable the other to exact, a greater amount in value than was originally stipulated for. They would, therefore, be inevitably driven to that which was called by an eminent writer (the late William Cobbett) an equitable adjustment; and though he did not participate in the general views of that writer, which varied, indeed, like the colours of a rainbow, he thought he had in this case happily described what the effect of this measure would be. They were not without experience of what such a measure would be. They had already had bitter experience of that measure of confiscation called Peel's Currency Bill; and the present measure might justly be called the second volume of Peel's edicts of confiscation. If, however, they were to have free trade in corn, why should there not be free trade in all agricultural produce? Why should not the farmer be allowed to grow tobacco on his own land, and manufacture sugar from his beet-root? If they were to be called on to compete with the poorest countries in Europe, they could only do so by means of the measures he had mentioned, and by an enormous reduction of taxation. The cry would soon be

set up for an immediate and total repeal of taxation, particularly on the articles of soap, coffee, sugar, and low-priced teas; and after all it would be found impossible to satisfy the public demand. He concluded, therefore, by warning their Lordships of the danger of their course; that it would end in nothing less than ruin and revolution; and if the revolution should proceed, which might now be said to have commenced, he cast upon the heads of its authors all the calamities which would ensue.

The EARL OF SELKIRK merely rose to say that he continued still to take the same view of the measure which he had done when the question was last before their Lordships. It had been said by some noble Lords, that after this measure was carried, that was, after the question had been put that this Bill do pass—the Corn Laws would be no more heard of. He did not believe that. And if the view which he took of the matter should prove to be correct, he trusted their Lordships would not hesitate to reconsider the subject. That was no new thing: the country had more than once been without any system of Corn Laws, till they got tired of that, and re-enacted them; and if their Lordships found that this measure brought ruin and misfortune and mischief on the country, he trusted their Lordships would have no hesitation to retrace their steps, and return to that which he held to be, compared with history, the Corn Law constructed upon the best plan which this country had ever witnessed—he meant the last edition of the sliding scale.

The DUKE OF RICHMOND remarked the circumstance that the third reading of this Bill had been moved without any noble Lord rising to move that it be read a third time that day six months. Now, he should be very sorry that his name should appear on the Journals of the House as assenting to the third reading of the Bill. He was anxious to hear some explanation from the Government relative to the statement made by his noble Friend the President of the Board of Control, that it was the intention of the Government to persevere in introducing some equivalent or compensation, or whatever it was, to the landed interest, and that all that remained to be done in the matter was, to embody their intention in an Act of Parliament. Now, that was just one of the things of which they had a right to complain, namely, that the Bill had not yet been brought in, and, what was

worse, that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in bringing forward his budget, did not say a single syllable of the sums to be paid in aid of county rates. What he wished to hear from Her Majesty's Government before they separated, was, whether they were still of opinion that the statements by the right hon. Baronet at the head of the Government, on the first reading of this Bill, might be carried into effect; because it was very possible that the Act of Parliament in question might not be framed under the direction of the present Government. It was possible that that Government might be out of office not only before this Bill had been brought in, but even before the Resolution on which it was to be founded could be proposed in the House of Commons. The effect of this would be, that their Lordships would have given a third reading to these two measures, and the Government would remain unpledged by anything except their speeches; and noble Lords must not be very angry with him for saying that speeches and pledges were very different things. He quite agreed with the noble Lord who had last spoken, in thinking that it was quite out of the question to treat the present measure as a final settlement of the question. Did they believe that the great body of the middle class of this country, landowners and tenantry, would sit down patiently under an Act which they felt to be injurious and unjust? No such thing. It would be no agitation for the continuance of the miserable sliding scale provided by this Bill, or for a miserable fixed duty of 4s.; but a struggle to get back an adequate protection to our agricultural produce, and to the domestic industry of the country. For his own part, he would do all in his power to persuade the farmers of this country not to yield, but to behave like men. He would recommend them to be up and stirring, and they might succeed in renewing protection. He would recommend them to agitate for the removal of local burdens, and not to submit any longer than they could help to the malt tax. He would recommend them to take care that those who hold mortgages on property should pay taxes equivalent to those paid by the holders of real property. If the farmers should reject his counsel, he had mistaken their character. It had been said that the tenant-farmers were indifferent to this measure. He denied it, and pointed to the petitions presented by himself and other noble Lords in support of his assertion. A right rev.

Prelate had stated that the parochial clergy were indifferent to this measure, and referred to the fact that they had held no meetings. He (the Duke of Richmond) applauded them for not meeting in a body, for no one objected more than he to large meetings of the clergy to discuss political subjects. Their names were to be found, however, at the head of numerous petitions signed by their parishioners. He thought the case of the working clergy a very hard one. He believed they did their duty to their parishioners, and practised what they preached, and that they deserved to be well treated; and yet how were they going to treat them? They were about to kindle strife between them and their parishioners, who would object to pay on an average of seven years when the price of corn had been reduced. He entertained considerable doubts whether the tenant ought to pay more than on an average of two or three years. He did not advocate a reduction in the pay of the clergy, but thought the loss ought to fall on the landlord. He had ventured to propose a clause for the protection of the tenant-farmer, but had not divided upon it, knowing that he would not have had the support of a single Peer; besides, he was unwilling to pledge noble Lords on the subject, knowing that as soon as the Bill had been carried, Ministers would resign. He doubted very much, however, whether they contemplated such an issue when the Bill was first introduced. He believed, on the contrary, that the Government acted on mistaken ideas of public opinion—that they did not take into consideration the independent character of the British yeoman. They never, he believed, contemplated the probability of a Cabinet Minister unable to obtain a seat as the champion of this popular measure. They never expected to see the Secretary for the Colonies and the Secretary for Ireland so long without seats. They were now about to carry the Corn Bill and the Customs Bill; and they would have the satisfaction of reflecting that, in carrying these two Bills, they had destroyed one of the largest parties which ever existed in this country; that they had risked the future government of the country; that they could not hope, for some time at least, if ever, again to see a strong Government. Their Lordships must be well aware of the evils which must result from a Government being kept in office by a majority of six. He was glad, he hoped and trusted, that they were about to resign; he was

glad, because he believed that their resignation would be of future service to the country. It would show future statesmen that they could not break pledges with impunity. It might throw out of office and disappoint 110 followers; but he, for one, would not be very sorry to find that these 110 individuals had gained nothing by their conversion. The noble Duke concluded by moving that the Bill be read a third time that day six months.

The EARL OF ELLENBOROUGH, in answer to the question put to him by the noble Duke who had just sat down, as to whether the Government still thought it expedient to pass the measure with respect to the burdens on land with which the Corn Bill was to be accompanied, begged to state, on behalf of himself and his Colleagues, that their opinions on the point had undergone no change. He would also say for himself—and he believed he might also say for his Colleagues—that they would consider themselves individually bound to endeavour to obtain every one of those measures.

The DUKE OF RICHMOND'S Amendment was then negatived, and the Bill read a third time, and *passed*. The Earl of HARDWICKE, Earl STANHOPE, the Duke of RICHMOND, and some other Peers cried loudly "Not content."

CUSTOMS DUTIES BILL.

On the Order of the Day for the Third Reading of this Bill being moved,

The DUKE OF RICHMOND moved that it be read a third time that day six months. He wished to ask the noble Lord at the head of the Board of Trade whether, during the short period which was expected to intervene before the resignation of the Government, he could receive a deputation from the Spitalfields weavers? On a former occasion, the House was aware, when these parties attended at the Board of Trade they had not the good fortune to see the noble Lord, who was ill in bed, and therefore could not attend. The deputation was therefore received by the Vice President of the Board of Trade; and the circumstance had never been communicated to the noble Lord. The deputation certainly left the Board of Trade under the impression that they had made out a case which would entitle them to favourable consideration. The official answer, he believed, was that their case would be considered. He understood that they asked precisely the same concession as that made

to the Coventry ribbon manufacturers. He wished to know whether the noble Earl would receive a deputation from the Spitalfields weavers, and whether, if their case should turn out to be the same as that of the Coventry ribbon manufacturers, he would think it right to propose, or at all events to support, a Bill to place the former in the same situation as the latter? He asked the Government whether they ought not to embrace this opportunity of rectifying a mistake; and he was the more anxious on this point because an impression prevailed amongst large bodies in this country that justice was entirely lost sight of.

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE said, the noble Duke was perfectly accurate in stating that he had been prevented by illness from being present when the Spitalfields deputation attended at the Board of Trade. Indeed, he had never heard a syllable about that deputation until it was mentioned the other night in that House. He wished, however, to vindicate his right hon. Friend the Vice President of the Board of Trade from the charges which had been made against him. The noble Duke was altogether in error in assuming that the fact of the Spitalfields deputation not having been communicated to him (Earl Dalhousie) was equivalent to a denial of justice. These parties, on the contrary, had the advantage of communicating with the officer of the Government whose opinion was of far more consequence than that of the President of the Board of Trade, and who, after all, would have to determine the question—namely, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, acting with the Lords of the Treasury. The case of these parties was placed before the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who declined to accede to their request. They had not, therefore, been left without a hearing; and under these circumstances he felt that he should be only mocking them if he proposed to receive a deputation for the purpose of hearing their case.

LORD STANLEY wished to know whether, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer declined to accede to the request of these parties, he was aware that a precisely similar request, made under precisely similar circumstances, had been granted to the Coventry ribbon manufacturers?

The EARL OF DALHOUSIE: The Chancellor of the Exchequer was aware of the circumstance, and for this reason—that the Coventry weavers, after leaving the

Board of Trade, waited on him as the officer whose duty it was finally to examine into these matters.

The DUKE OF RICHMOND said, he wished to observe that the demand made by the Spitalfields weavers could not be opposed to the principle of free trade; because a similar demand had been granted to the Coventry weavers, after having been supported by the hon. Member for Coventry, who was known to be a very decided free trader.

On Question, "That 'now' stand part of the Motion," *resolved in the affirmative.*

Bill read 3^a. accordingly, and *passed.*
House adjourned.

The following Protests against the Third Reading of the Bill to Amend the Laws relating to the Importation of Corn were entered on the Journals:—

(No. 1.)

DISSENTIENT—

1. Because the repeal of the Corn Laws will greatly increase the dependence of this country upon foreign countries for its supply of food, and will thereby expose it to dangers against which former statesmen have thought it essential to take legislative precautions.

2. Because there is no security nor probability that other nations will take similar steps; and this country will, therefore, not only be exposed to the risks of failure of supply consequent on a state of war, but will also be exclusively subject to an unlimited influx of corn in times of abundance, and to sudden checks whenever short crops shall reduce the ordinary supply from the exporting countries, or their Governments shall deem it necessary to take precautionary measures for their own protection, thus causing rapid and disastrous fluctuations in the markets of this country.

3. Because under a system of protection the agriculture of this country has more than kept pace with the increasing demand of its increasing population; and because it is to be apprehended that the removal of protection may throw some lands out of cultivation, and check in others the progress of improvement which has led to this satisfactory result.

4. Because it is unjust to withdraw protection from the landed interest of this country, while that interest remains subject to exclusive burdens imposed for purposes of general, and not of special advantage.

5. Because the loss to be sustained by the repeal of the Corn Laws will fall most heavily on the least wealthy portion of the landed proprietors, will press immediately and severely on the tenant-farmers, and through them, with ruinous consequences, on the agricultural labourers.

6. Because indirectly, but not less certainly, injurious consequences will result to the manufacturing interest, and especially to the artisans and mechanics, from competition with the agricultural labourers thrown out of employment, but principally from the loss of the home market, caused by the inability of the producers of grain, and those dependent on them, to consume manufactured goods to the same extent as heretofore.

7. Because the same cause will produce similar evil results to the tradesmen, retail dealers, and others in country towns, not themselves engaged in agricultural pursuits, but mainly dependent for their subsistence on their dealings with those who are so engaged.

8. Because the effect of a repeal of the Corn Laws will be especially injurious to Ireland, by lowering the value of her principal exports, and by still further reducing the demand for labour, the want of which is among the principal evils of her social condition.

9. Because a free trade in corn will cause a large and unnecessary diminution of annual income, thus impairing the revenue of the country, at the same time that it cripples the resources of those classes on whom the weight of local taxation now mainly falls.

10. Because a general reduction of prices, consequent on reduction of the price of corn, will tend unduly to raise the monied interest at the expense of all others, and to aggravate the pressure of the national burdens.

11. Because the removal of differential duties in favour of Canadian corn is at variance with the legislative encouragement held out to that Colony by Parliament, on the faith of which the colonists have laid out large sums upon the improvement of their internal navigation; and because the removal of protection will divert the traffic of the interior from the St. Lawrence and the British ports of Montreal and Quebec, to the foreign port of New York; thus throwing out of employment a large amount of British shipping, severing the commercial interests of Canada from those of the parent country, and connecting those interests most intimately with the United States of America.

12. Because the adoption of a similar system with regard to other articles of commerce will tend to sever the strongest bond of union between this country and her Colonies, will deprive the British merchant of that which is now his most certain market, and sap the foundation of that colonial system, to which, commercially and politically, this country owes much of its present greatness.

STANLEY
RICHMOND
EXETER
HARDWICK
WARWICK
MALMESBURY
LUCAN
STANHOPE
G. ROCHESTER
FEYERSHAM
BOLTON
HASTINGS
DONERAILE
SOUTHAMPTON
SALTOUN

PENSHURST
SKELMERSDALE
KENTON
BOSTON
HAY
NEWCASTLE
MARLBOROUGH
SANDWICH
WILTON
REDESDALE
RUTLAND
CARLETON
ST VINCENT
OXFORD AND MORTIMER
MUNSTER

BEAUFORT
BERWICK
ELDON
ASHBURTON
GAGE
CADOGAN
NORTHWICK
H. EXETER
BUCKINGHAM AND CHANDOS
DELAWARE
CANTERBURY
CLEVELAND
C. BANOOR
MANVERS
BERESFORD
SOMERS
TANKERVILLE
MANSFIELD
ABINGDON
BEAUMONT
ORFORD
LOVELL AND HOLLAND
SHEFFIELD
AIRLIE
BEVERLEY
COLCHESTER
POMFRET
SHERBORNE
GRAHAM
DIGHT

COMDERMERE
COLVILLE OF CULROSS
SONDES
CHESTERFIELD
ANDROSSAN
RANFURLY
GASCOIGNE SALISBURY
ORNEY
GRANTLEY
LOFTUS
H. GLOUCESTER AND
BRISTOL
SELKIRK
TEMPLEMORE
CHARLEVILLE
DARTMOUTH
NELSON
STRADTHROKE
POLWARTH
LAKE
WILLOUGHBY D'ERESBY
BRADFORD
VAUX OF HARROWDEN
CAHNAVON
BRODRICK
CROFTON
DE FRETNE
CAWDOR
CLANCARTY
LORTON

(No. 2.)

DISSENTIENT—

Because the Bill for repealing the Corn Laws is not accompanied, as in justice it ought to have been, by the following measures, viz. :—

1. The entire and immediate repeal of all the taxes which fall directly upon land—the land tax, the malt tax, and the hop duty.

2. The equalization of all the rates of which the occupiers of land bear at present an unfair and undue proportion—the poor rates, the highway rates, and the county rates.

3. An alteration of the Tithe Commutation Act, which can no longer be just or applicable.

4. A legislative enactment authorizing all persons who hold leases of land for unexpired terms of years to surrender them on giving six months' notice before any of the usual days of payment.

5. A legislative enactment directing the payment stipulated in every contract to be reduced according to the proportion which the average price of wheat at the time of making such payment bears to its average price at the time that such contract was formed, so that such payment may be of the same value as was originally intended and agreed to by the parties.

6. A legislative enactment authorizing the cultivation of tobacco and the preparation of sugar from beetroot and other vegetables, and exempting the said tobacco and sugar from the payment of any duty.

7. The entire and immediate repeal of those taxes which are imposed upon articles of general consumption, of the Excise duty on soap, and of the Customs duties on sugar and coffee, the pro-

790 CORN IMPORTATION AND CUSTOMS DUTIES BILLS—ROYAL ASSENT.

Jaco of British Colonies, and on those sorts of tea and tobacco which are used by the labouring classes.

STANHOPE.

HASTINGS.

MALMESBURY.

RICHMOND, for the first six reasons.

PENSHURST, for the third reason.

BEAUFORT, for the first three reasons.

MANSFIELD, for the first three reasons.

SELKIRK, for the second reason.

GRANTLEY, for the second reason.

BRODERICK, for the first three reasons.

CROFTON, for the first two and sixth.

DE FRESNE, for the first two and sixth.

CLANCARTY, for the first two and sixth.

TANKERVILLE.

HOUSE OF LORDS,

Friday, June 26, 1846.

This day the Corn Importation Bill and the Customs Duties Bill received the Royal Assent.

THE END.

Author

13380

Title The battle for native industry: debate upon the
Corn Laws. Vol. 2. B3365

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